THE UNDERCOVERFISH GROUP ANTHOLOGY #5

TALES FROM THE BONEYARD

INTRODUCTION

I always loved Halloween. My favorite holiday, even above Christmas.
The season is filled with monsters, monsters everywhere, and one of the biggest hooks for me was Halloween Comic books.
Back in the early 70s, DC Comics put Batman through a virtual Haunted House with creepy covers by some of the best artists working in the industry, Neal Adams, Berni Wrightson, Mike Kaluta just to name a few.
I hunted these books down in the days before the internet after discovering them at a friends house who had an older brother who had bought them new off the stands. Eventually it led to a discovery of all kinds of Halloween themed comic books and it was only a natural that this UCF Anthology which we started nearly a year ago follow suit.
We wanted to do something special with this one, so Jamie Buckmaster and I tore up a bunch of ideas and threw them into a hat-- we pulled out elements called GHOST, BUTLER, ROMANCE, MURDER, MYSTERY and BIOGRAPHY and decided to issue a challenge to our fellow UCF artists & writers to come up with all new stories that contained these elements. How did they do? Check them out for yourself. I think these are some terrific spooky stories, and I like the idea that every one is done in one, so you aren't reading a part of a bigger epic.
Happy Halloween. -- Andy

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TALES FROM THE BONEYARD - THE UCF ANTHOLOGY #5 HALLOWEEN 2006 - ALL STORIES AND IMAGES ARE

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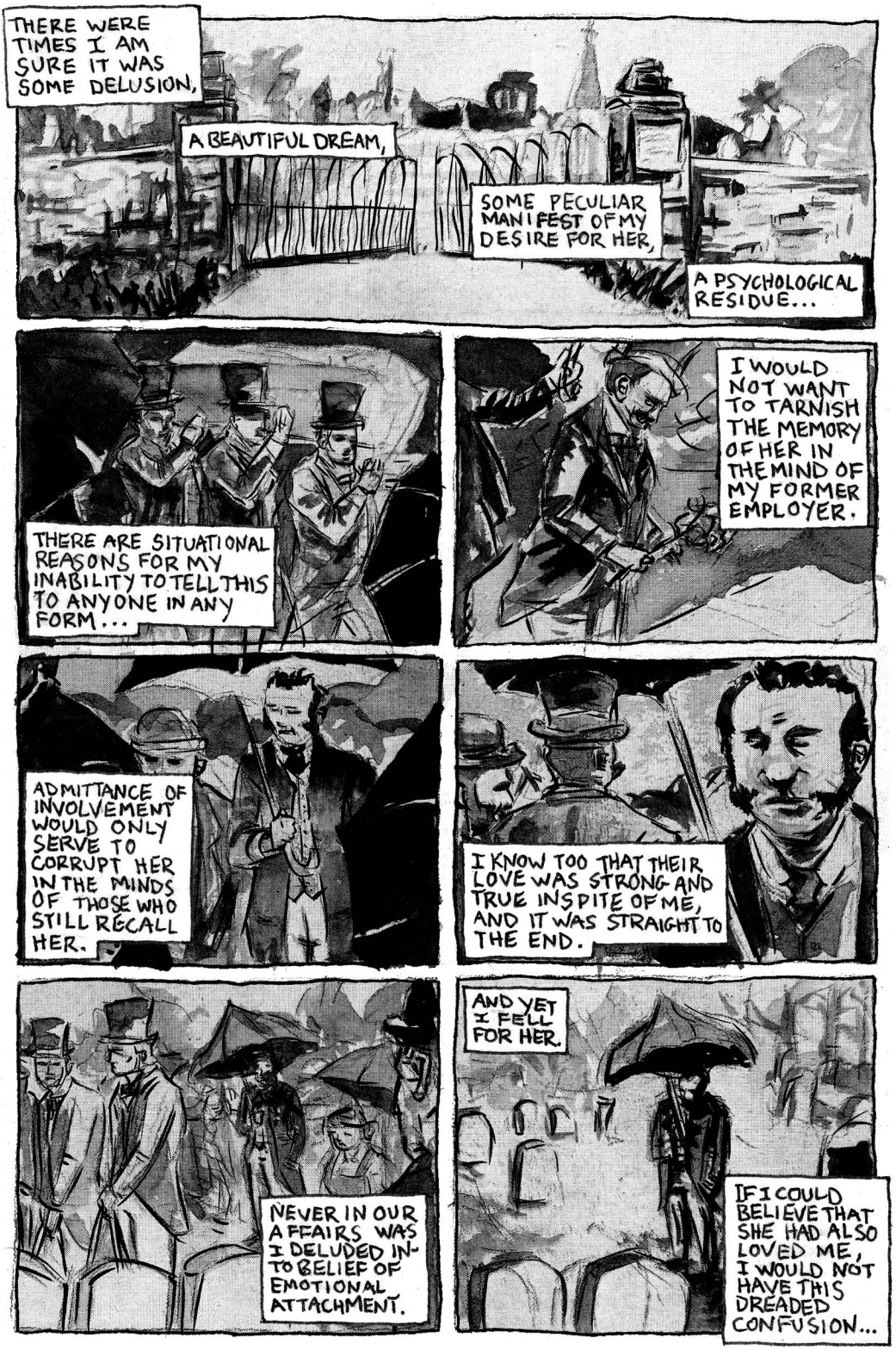
OCTOBER'S
"Bright Blue Weather"
A good time to read!

JAMIE BUCKMASTER


THERE WERE TIMES I AM SURE IT WAS SOME DELUSION,
A BEAUTIFUL DREAM,
SOME PECULIAR MANIFEST OF MY DESIRE FOR HER,
A PSYCHOLOGICAL RESIDUE...
THERE ARE SITUATIONAL REASONS FOR MY INABILITY TO TELL THIS TO ANYONE IN ANY FORM...
I WOULD NOT WANT TO TARNISH THE MEMORY OF HER IN THE MIND OF MY FORMER EMPLOYER.
ADMITTANCE OF INVOLVEMENT WOULD ONLY SERVE TO CORRUPT HER IN THE MINDS OF THOSE WHO STILL RECALL HER.
I KNOW TOO THAT THEIR LOVE WAS STRONG AND TRUE IN SPITE OF ME, AND IT WAS STRAIGHT TO THE END.
NEVER IN OUR AFFAIRS WAS I DELUDED INTO BELIEF OF EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT.
AND YET I FELL FOR HER.
IF I COULD BELIEVE THAT SHE HAD ALSO LOVED ME, I WOULD NOT HAVE THIS DREADED CONFUSION...

BUT, WHATEVER THE REALITY, I MUST WRITE THIS...
LET IT BE JUDGED BY ANOTHER, FOR I CANNOT TELL ANYMORE...
THE SIR AND MADAME WERE HIGH SOCIETY GADABOUTS...
I WAS TAKEN ON SHORTLY AFTER THEIR WEDDING.
THE YEARS WERE HAPPY FOR THEM AND ME ALIKE...
BUT THIS IS NOT IMPORTANT.

IT WAS ONE NIGHT—
HOW CAN I EXPLAIN THIS?
I WAS AWOKEN ONE NIGHT TO A PRESENCE...
A FEELING ONE GETS BETWEEN SLEEP AND WAKEFULNESS.
I WAS NOT ALONE... YET COULD SEE NOONE.
IN THAT DARKNESS AND OPPRESSIVE SILENCE I COULD FEEL A WEIGHT ON THE BED...
AS IF BURDENED WITH A BODY OTHER THAN MINE...
I SAT FROZEN, UNSURE WHETHER TO REACH OUT TO IT OR LEAP FROM IT...

AND THEN THERE WAS THIS:
AND LATER ON, IF ASKED, I WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN IT,
BECAUSE IT REQUIRED AN ENORMOUS SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF,
COUPLED WITH THE ACCEPTANCE OF A REALITY WHICH, LIKE IN A NIGHTMERE, ISN'T REAL AND COULDN'T BE, BUT IS.
THERE... ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF MY VISION, RISING LIKE A SUMMER CLOUD FROM THE SHEETS, MILKY IN THE MOON, SHE ROSE SMOOTH AND SLOW, LIKE SOMETHING UNDER WATER...
... THEN, DELIBERATE AND FLUID AND CHILLING, SHE TURNED HER HEAD TO STARE AT ME.
THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG, I KNEW, SOME OTHERNESS TO HER, BUT WHAT I COULD NOT SAY...
I TALKED TO HER BUT KNEW INSTINCTIVELY SHE WOULD NOT RESPOND.

THEN, NOT EVEN WHEN I PERCEIVED HER GENTLY ROLLING OVER ABOVE THE BED DID I FEEL FEAR.
BUT I DO NOT FEEL I NEED TO SET DOWN WHAT THEN OCCURRED.
I WILL SAY THIS:
WE DID HAVE SEX, BUT WHAT WAS EXCHANGED WAS DIFFERENT THAN SEX.

IT WAS MORE INFORMATIONAL
...NO
IT WAS MORE LIKE EMOTION CONTAINING INFORMATION.
THERE IS NO WAY TO DESCRIBE THIS, BUT...
I WAS INFILTRATED WITH ALL MANNERS AND SHADES OF EMOTION...
WHICH SEEMED TO HAVE NO SOURCE FROM WITHIN...
THE ACT WAS FILLING ME WITH HER EMOTIONS, HER THOUGHTS,
HER LIFE!
THESE VARIED GREATLY IN DURATION AND INTENSITY...
TIME PASSED INDETERMINABLY...

THEN...
THERE WAS A SUDDEN AND PAINFUL BURST OF FEAR THAT TRAVELED UP MY SPINE AND GRIPPED ME...
THE INTENSITY OF THE EMOTION CAUSED AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF PHYSICAL PAIN.
MY EYES WENT BLANK WITH A PURE LIGHT, AS THOUGH LIGHTNING HAD JUST STRUCK MY SKULL.
I BELIEVE I PASSED OUT THEN...
MY NEXT MEMORY IS OF THE WINDING STAIRS IN THE DIM PRE-DAWN.
OVERCOME WITH FEELINGS THAT OUGHT NOT EXIST IN ME, I TOOK A SHOULDER TO THEIR DOOR WITH FORCE.
THE DOOR LEPT OPEN WILDLY AND I WENT TUMBLING THROUGH IT AND OVER SOMETHING THAT WAS JUST BEYOND IT.

THERE WAS A MOMENT OF INCREASED HORROR, HAVING LOST MY SENSE OF PLACE...
I FOUND THE FLOOR AND STRUGGLED TO LIFT MY REELING BODY...
I HEARD A VOICE NEXT TO ME SAY THESE TWO WORDS:
I THOUGHT I SAW HER BODY, AND ABOVE IT, I THOUGHT I SAW HER...
SHE'S DEAD.
I WAS LATER FOUND ON A BENCH DOWN TOWN, NOT ASLEEP BUT UNRESPONSIVE TO STIMULI.

NOW I WRITE THIS IN A ROOM FULL OF BOXES...
I AM LEAVING.
I AM QUITTING AND MOVING.
I AM AFRAID OF THIS HOUSE BUT I MUST WRITE THIS DOWN IN THIS ROOM...
IF ONLY AS A REMINDER THAT REALITY DID PLAY AT LEAST A SMALL ROLL IN THE EVENT...
I HONESTLY CANNOT SAY HOW MUCH WAS AN INVENTION OF A BRAIN OVER HORRIFIED.
WHY ELSE WOULD I HAVE CHARGED INTO HER ROOM?
AND WHEN I CHECK MY COAT POCKET I FIND HER WEDDING RING...
I KEEP EXPECTING IT TO DISAPPEAR,
I KEEP HOPING IT WILL. THAT REALITY WILL REALIZE IT'S MADE A MISTAKE...
I WISH I COULD ERASE THESE MEMORIES OF EMOTIONS THAT WERE NOT MINE, I NEVER HAD.

I HAVE FELT WHAT IT IS TO DIE AND I CAN'T HELP SUSPECTING FOUL.
WHY WAS HE AT THE DOOR?
HOW DID I FEEL HER FEAR!?
AND WHEN I REALLY THINK OF HIS FACE...
SOMEHOW I KNOW IT WAS WRONG.
OH, GOD! I CAN SEE IT...
I THOUGHT IT TO BE SOBBING-
SHE'S DEAD.
AND HE WAS LAUGHING...!

Halloween TRIVIA

1. Why are Orange and Black' the colors of Halloween?

2. Where did the tradition of Jack-O-Lanterns originate?

3. Besides Orange- what other color do pumpkins come in?

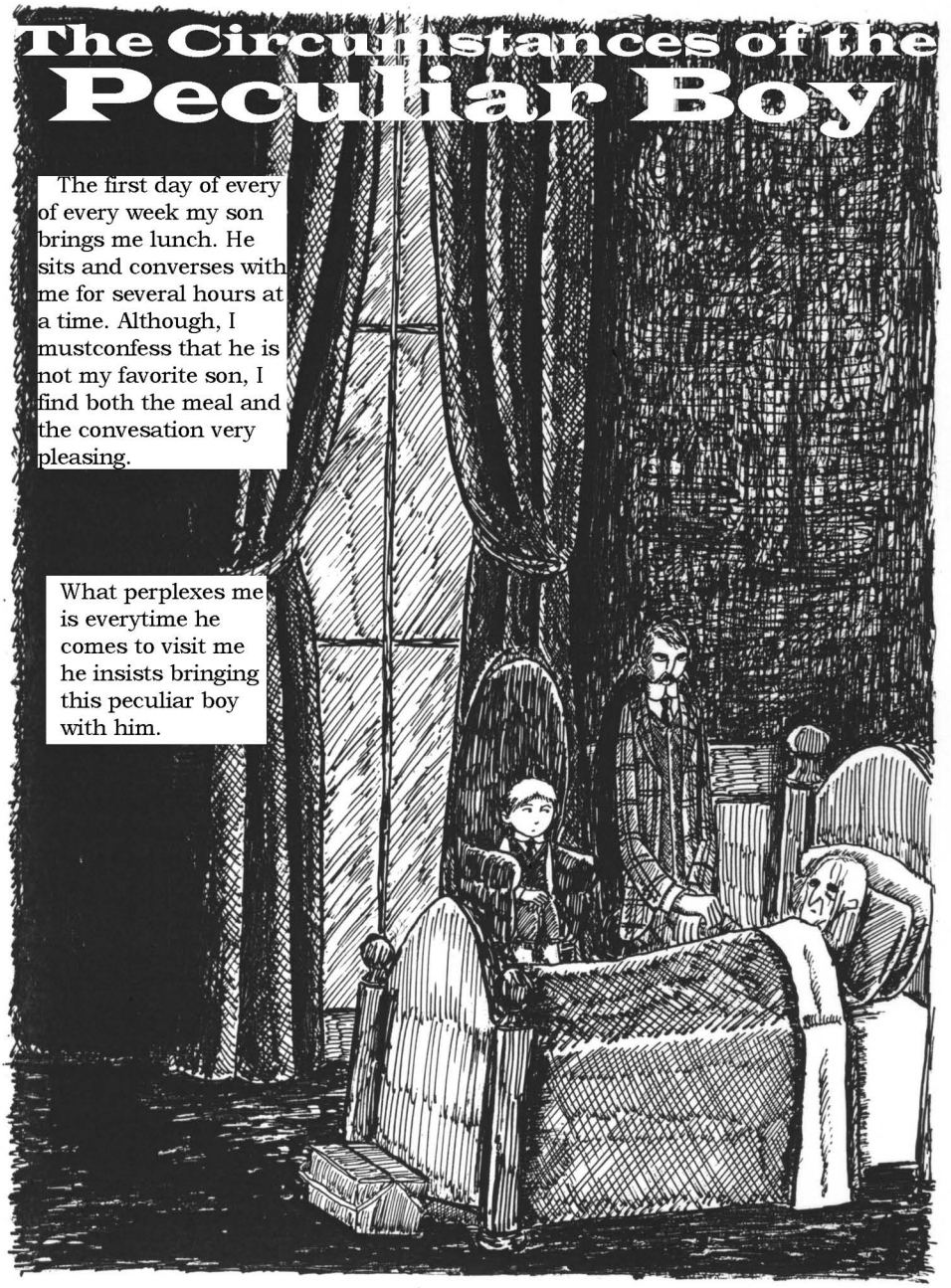
4. What was the first wrapped candy in America?

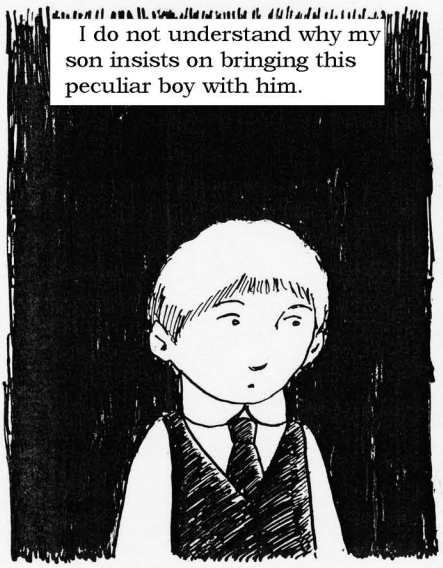
5. Who brought the tradition of Halloween to America?

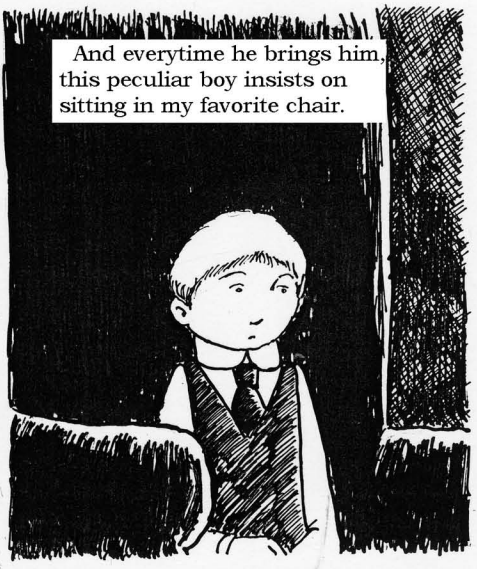
Answers and more Trivia on page 26

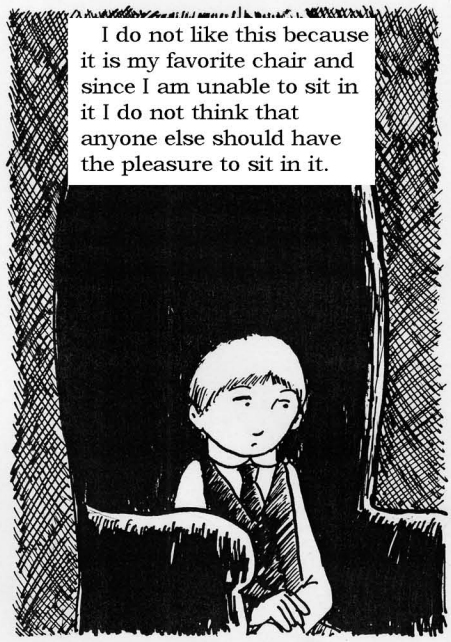
HALLOWEEN
ROLLER SKATING
CARNIVAL
BRET HERHOLZ
BRING YOUR SKATES
ON THE MALL.....CENTRAL PARK
OCT. 31 1936.....8.30 PM

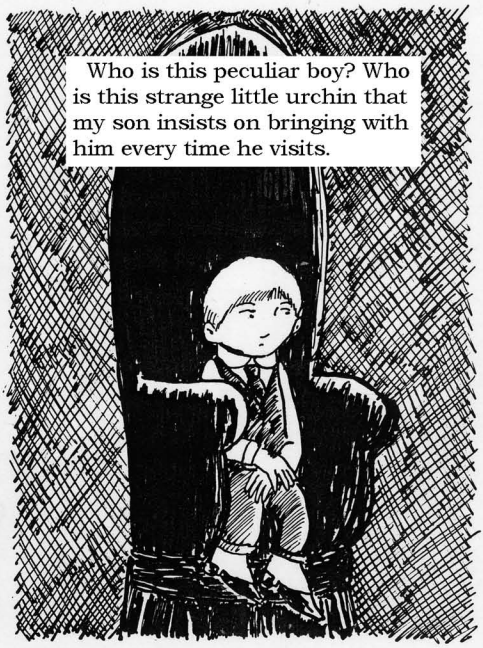
The Circumstances of the Peculiar Boy

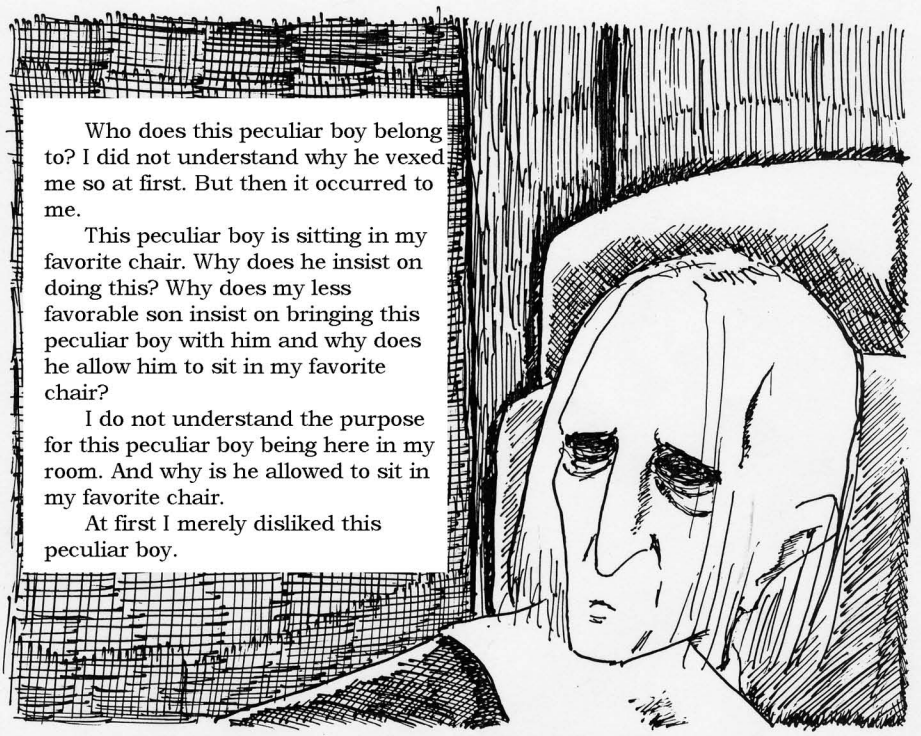

The first day of every of every week my son brings me lunch. He sits and converses with me for several hours at a time. Although, I mustconfess that he is not my favorite son, I find both the meal and the convesation very pleasing.
What perplexes me is everytime he comes to visit me he insists bringing this peculiar boy with him.

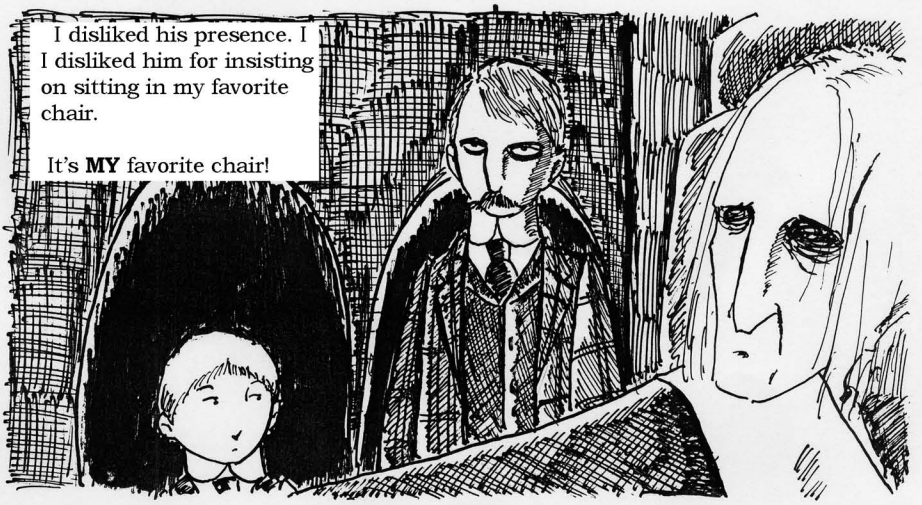

I do not understand why my son insists on bringing this peculiar boy with him.

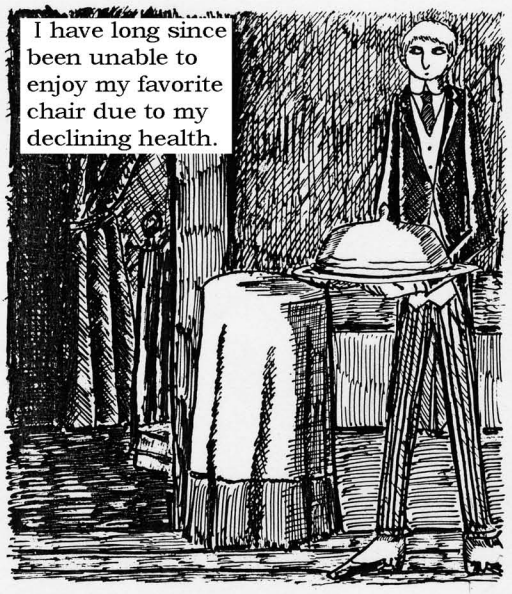

And everytime he brings him, this peculiar boy insists on sitting in my favorite chair.

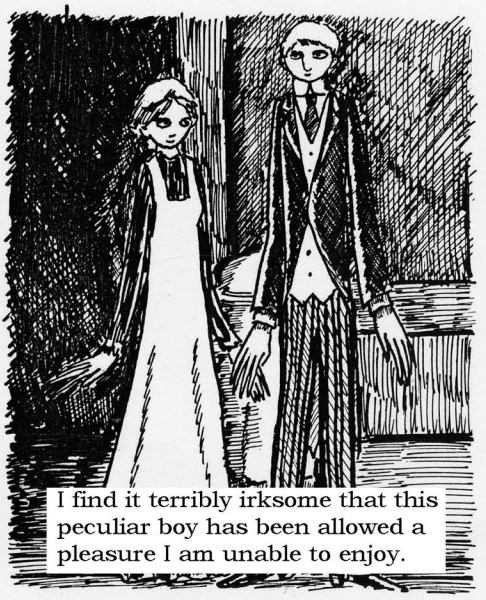

I do not like this because it is my favorite chair and since I am unable to sit in it I do not think that anyone else should have the pleasure to sit in it.


Who is this peculiar boy? Who is this strange little urchin that my son insists on bringing with him every time he visits.


Who does this peculiar boy belong to? I did not understand why he vexed me so at first. But then it occurred to me.
This peculiar boy is sitting in my favorite chair. Why does he insist on doing this? Why does my less favorable son insist on bringing this peculiar boy with him and why does he allow him to sit in my favorite chair?
I do not understand the purpose for this peculiar boy being here in my room. And why is he allowed to sit in my favorite chair.
At first I merely disliked this peculiar boy.

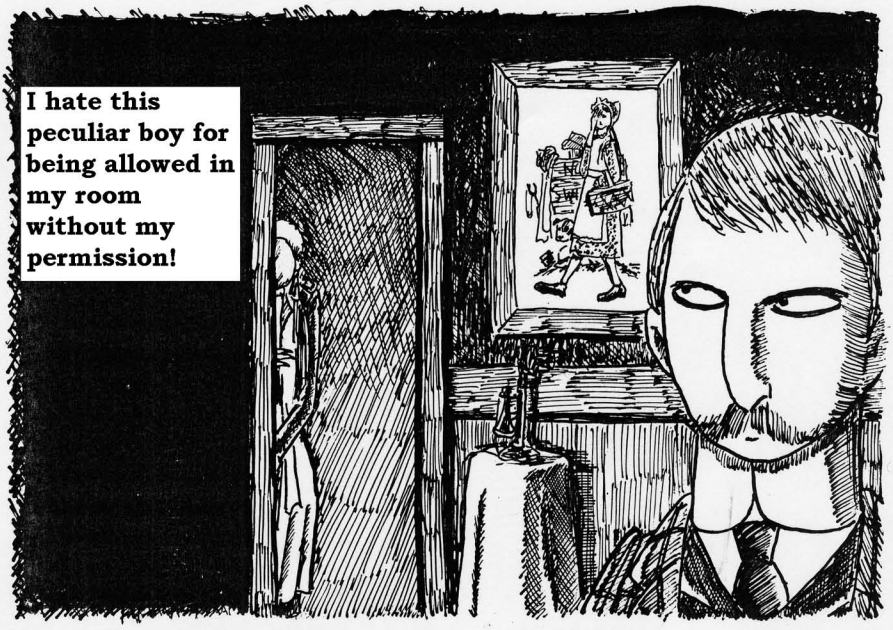

I disliked his presence. I I disliked him for insisting on sitting in my favorite chair.
It's **MY** favorite chair!

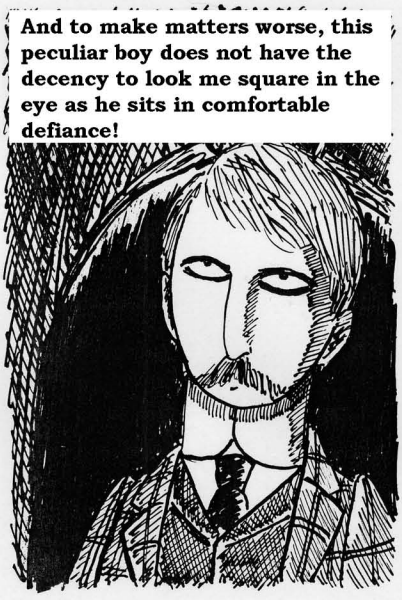

I have long since been unable to enjoy my favorite chair due to my declining health.


I find it terribly irksome that this peculiar boy has been allowed a pleasure I am unable to enjoy.

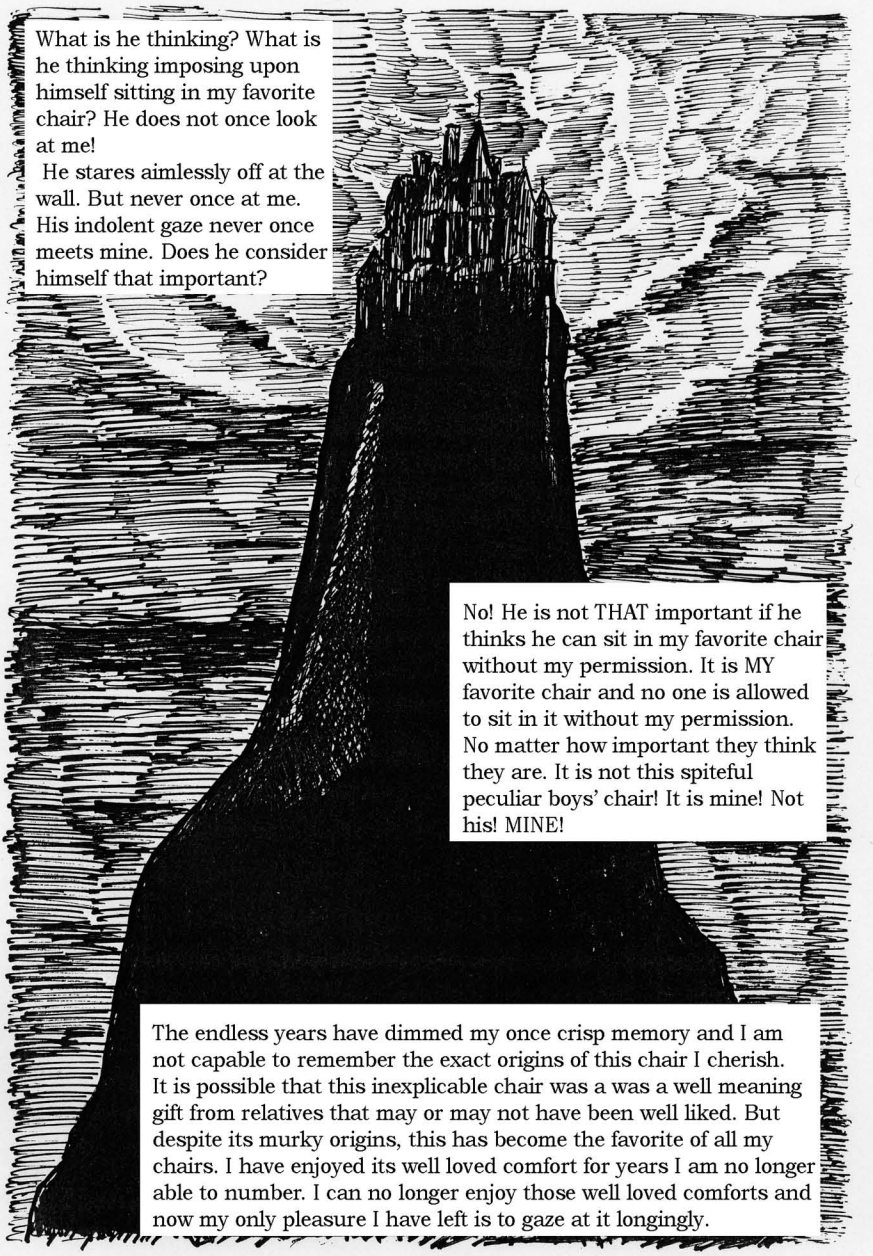
Today I find myself unable to contain my my revulsion for this peculiar boy.

Once again I find that he has been allowed into my room. Once again I find him sitting in my favorite chair.

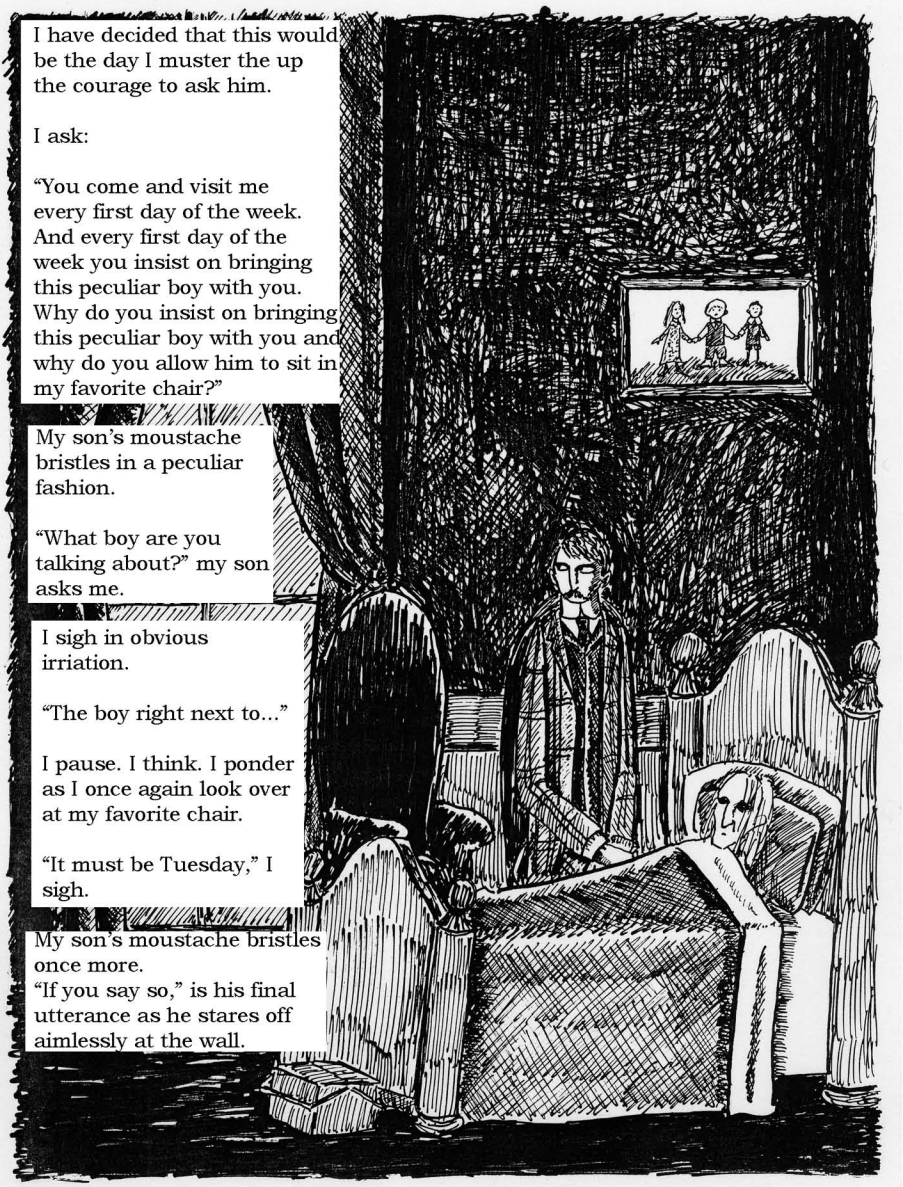

I hate this peculiar boy for being allowed in my room without my permission!


And to make matters worse, this peculiar boy does not have the decency to look me square in the eye as he sits in comfortable defiance!

The arrogance! The superciliousness! The outright conceit!


What is he thinking? What is he thinking imposing upon himself sitting in my favorite chair? He does not once look at me!
He stares aimlessly off at the wall. But never once at me. His indolent gaze never once meets mine. Does he consider himself that important?
No! He is not THAT important if he thinks he can sit in my favorite chair without my permission. It is MY favorite chair and no one is allowed to sit in it without my permission. No matter how important they think they are. It is not this spiteful peculiar boys' chair! It is mine! Not his! MINE!
The endless years have dimmed my once crisp memory and I am not capable to remember the exact origins of this chair I cherish. It is possible that this inexplicable chair was a was a well meaning gift from relatives that may or may not have been well liked. But despite its murky origins, this has become the favorite of all my chairs. I have enjoyed its well loved comfort for years I am no longer able to number. I can no longer enjoy those well loved comforts and now my only pleasure I have left is to gaze at it longingly.

It is the only enjoyment I have left. But that enjoyment has been robbed, yes robbed, from me! I am robbed of that pleasure everytime I see that wretched peculiar boy sitting in my favorite chair!
I hate that peculiar boy! I hate him for coming into my room univited!
I hate him for sitting in my favorite chair!
I feel a great deal of displeasure as I watch him sit there!
Why does my son allow this to take place? Why does he not once tell this horrid little urchin to leave my presence. He must know I cannot stand the sight of this wretched boy!
But my seditious son just sits there. As though this boy is not in the room.


I have decided that this would be the day I muster the up the courage to ask him.
I ask:
"You come and visit me every first day of the week. And every first day of the week you insist on bringing this peculiar boy with you. Why do you insist on bringing this peculiar boy with you and why do you allow him to sit in my favorite chair?"
My son's moustache bristles in a peculiar fashion.
"What boy are you talking about?" my son asks me.
I sigh in obvious irriation.
"The boy right next to..."
I pause. I think. I ponder as I once again look over at my favorite chair.
"It must be Tuesday," I sigh.
My son's moustache bristles once more.
"If you say so," is his final utterance as he stares off aimlessly at the wall.

Halloween TRIVIA

Did you know ...

The first Jack-O-Lanterns were carved into turnips.

Vampire bats actually live in Middle and South America - not Transylvania

It is said if you see a spider on Halloween, it's a loved one watching over you

Answers from page 16

1. Orange for the fall harvest, and black for death!
2. Ireland
3. Blue, white and green
4. Tootsie rolls!
5. European immigrants!

More Trivia on page 36

PETE BEAUDOIN

EASTIES

CH. 3

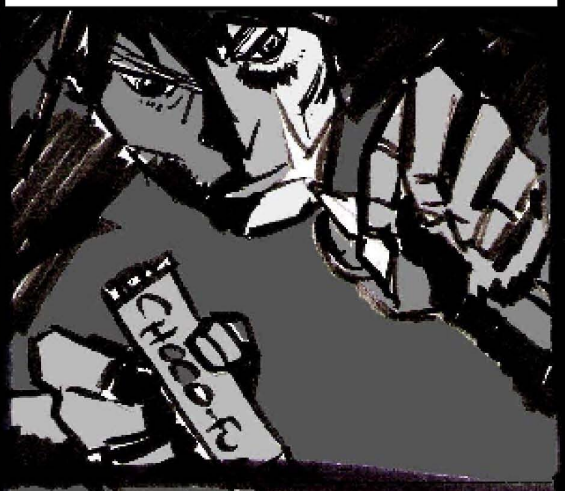
YOUNG EASTIES HALLOWEEN

by pete beaudoin

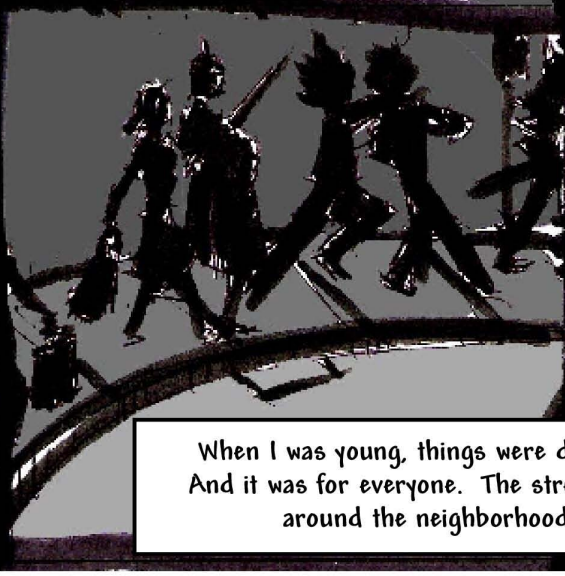
Halloween is different now.

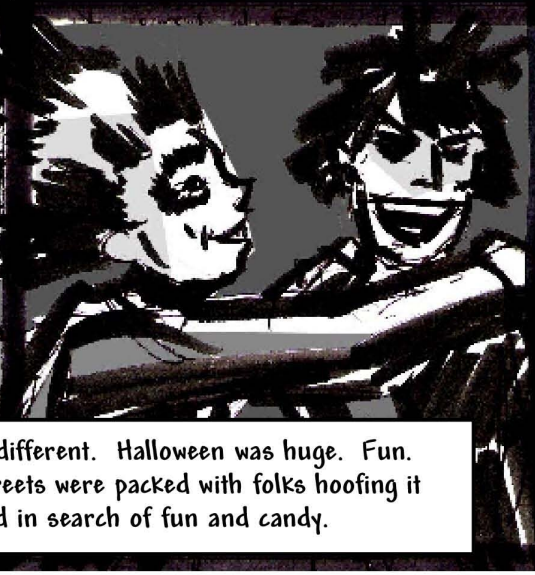
Parents are scard to send their kids out.

Fear of razor-blade candy from some kook.

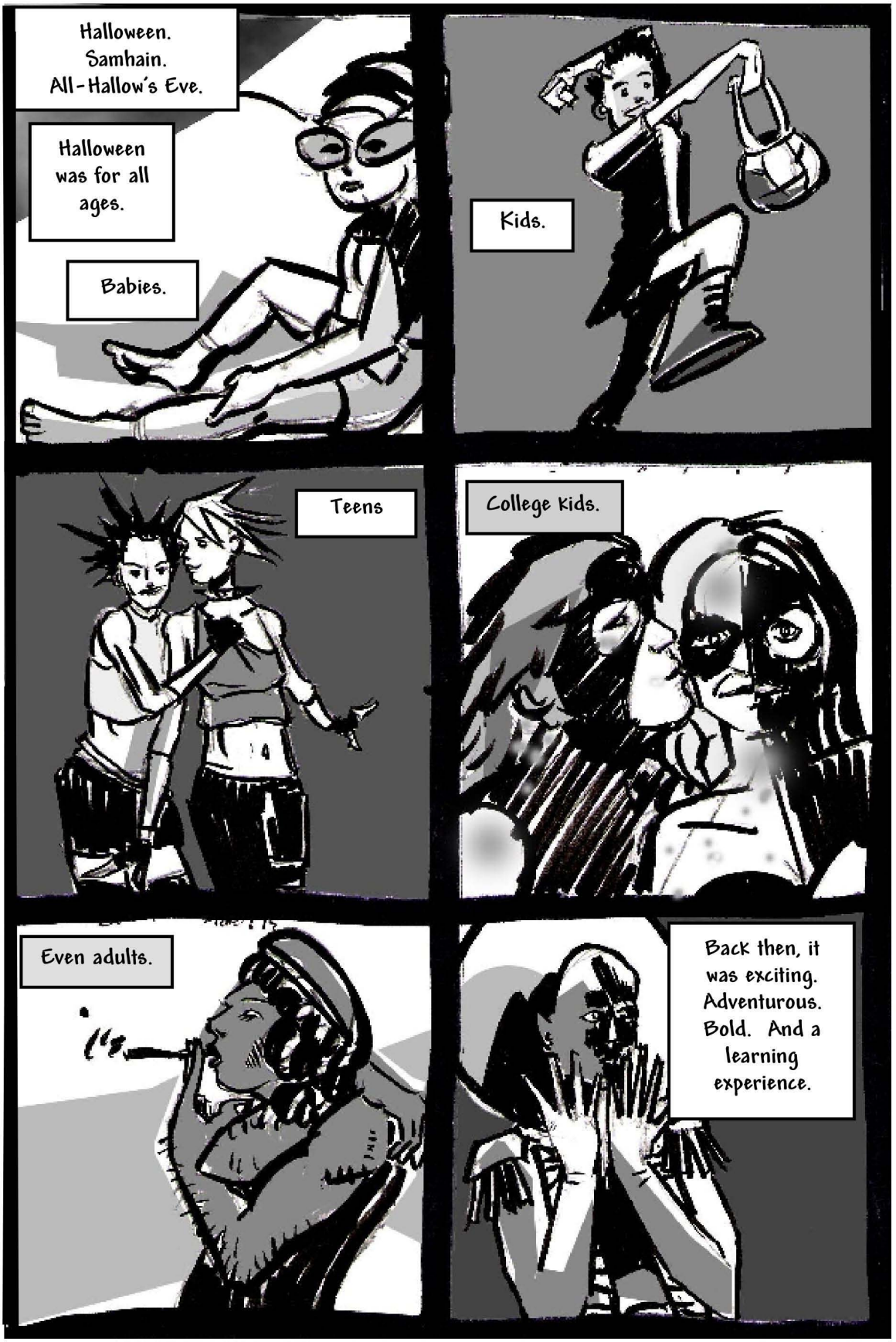


Devil's night mischief-makers. Who knows.





When I was young, things were different. Halloween was huge. Fun. And it was for everyone. The streets were packed with folks hoofing it around the neighborhood in search of fun and candy.


Halloween.
Samhain.
All-Hallow's Eve.
Halloween was for all ages.
Babies.
Kids.
Teens
College kids.
Even adults.
Back then, it was exciting. Adventurous. Bold. And a learning experience.

The First Halloween I vividly remember. I must have been 5, 6, 7 years old.
Not sure on the age, but it seems right.
I went with my pal Billy.
His big sister Brit went as our baby-sitter.
Our costumes were sweet plastic concoctions, highlighting our 70's sensibilities.
Most importantly, we had big bags for haul of candy.
A few blocks, and twenty-five Mounds-bars later, we arrived at the Weiners house. I knew the family. The dad sold my folks insurance, and I'd visited their house with my mom before.

TRICK OR TREAT !!
As the door opened, 4 or 5 older kids spilled out, almost knocking us to the ground.
I briefly said hi to Mrs. Weiner, and we were back on the road.
As always, the first order of bussiness was to compare what candy we had recieved.
OOH, A MARATHON BAR.

AAAHH
NAA!
Caught unaware, Billy and Brit were showered with some sticky substance, as a group of older kids in costume surrounded us.
And one of them grabbed hold of my bag of candy.
HEY !
Well, I wasn't just gonna let him have my candy.

So me and the big kid, dressed up like a ghost, danced round and round, playing tug-a-war with my precious pillowcase of candy.
Brit and Billy stared on.
Not sure what to do.
WOO HOO, GIMME YO' CANDY!
Something about this kid was familiar
and ghost-kid seemed to be taking his cues from the kid in the tuxedo.
That's where I knew him from. He ran out of the Weiner's house, because he was the Weiner's son. David Weiner.
CRAP.
DAVID, DAVID WEINER. TELL HIM TO LET GO OF MY CANDY!

I held on tight, and waited for Weiner to figure out that I knew who he was, so this could get back to his parents. They would probably not look too kindly on he and his pals stealing candy from kids half their age.
Wait for it.
WEINER, TELL HIM TO LET GO.
Wait for it.
LET GO OF THE BAG. COME ON GUYS. LET'S GO.
UM. SORRY GUYS. WE DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU.
Victory for the young EASTIE. And a life lesson learned.

The lesson I learned was. It sucks getting picked on. Put a stop to it when you can.
Age 15. Me and Rick Bantam. Halloween.
Rick thought it would be cool to steal some kid's candy.
Rick was a piece of work.
I keep trying to remember why I hung out with him.
Give me the bag Rick.
Robbie, you suck.
HERE YOU GO KID. SORRY ABOUT MY FRIEND. BY THE WAY I LIKE YOUR MASK.
REMINDS ME OF ONE I USED TO HAVE.
DON'T GIVE UP ON HALLOWEEN KID.
END.

Halloween TRIVIA

1. What is the most popular Halloween candy given today?

2. What famous horror film actor decided to become a gourmet cook?

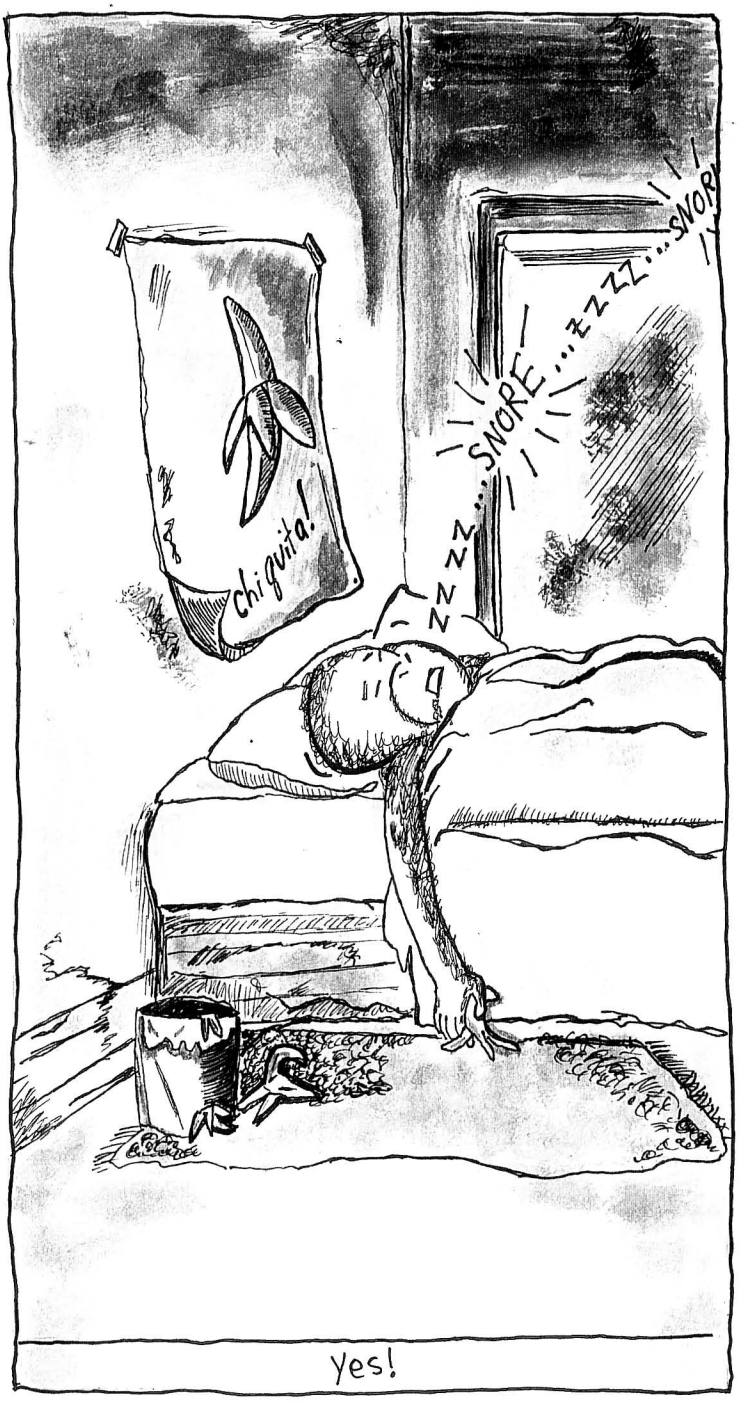
3. In the Charlie Brown movie, who turns out to be the "Great Pumpkin"?

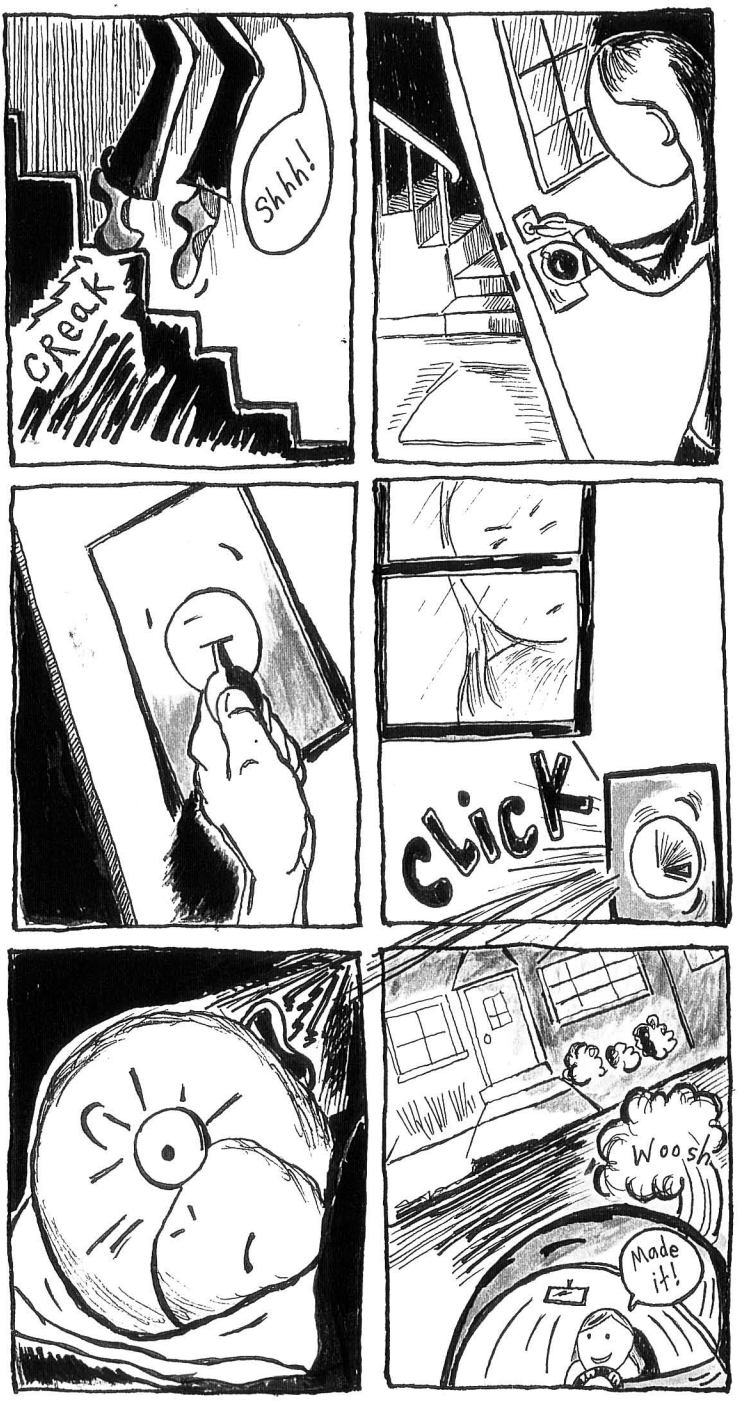
4. What is Dr. Frankenstein's first name?

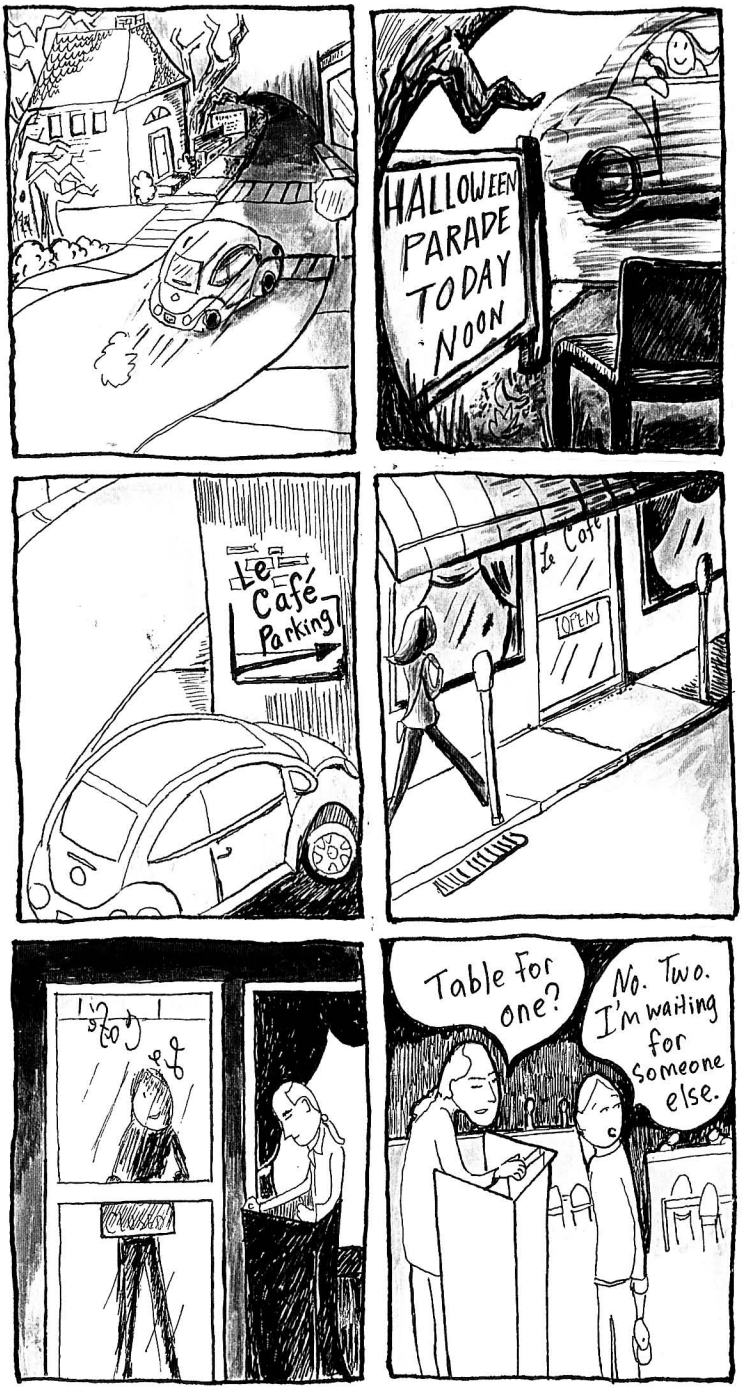
Answers and More Trivia on page 53

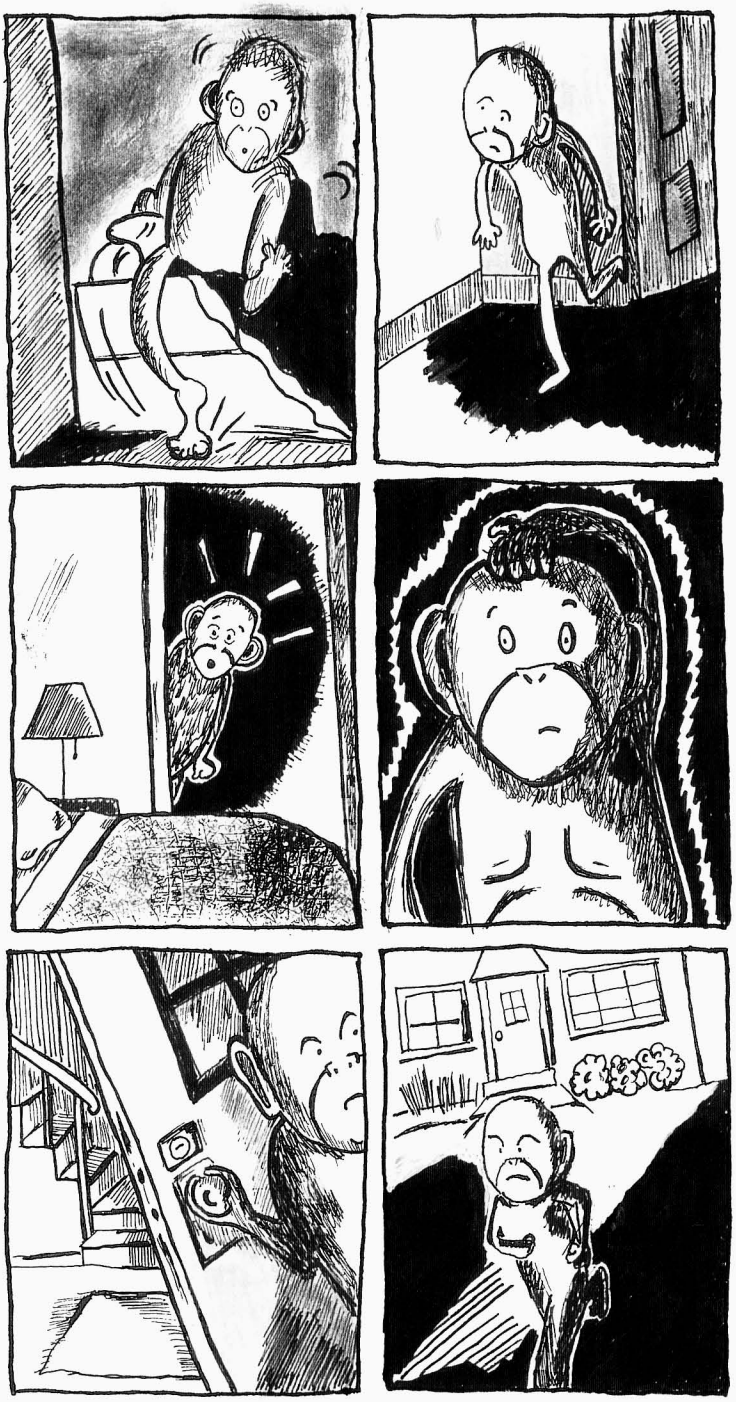
ALISON COWELL

Me n' Bruce in...
WALK ON BY...
by Alison Cowell


chiquita!
ZZZ...
SNORE!...ZZZZ...SNOR
Yes!


Shhh!
CReak
click
Woosh
Made it!


HALLOWEEN PARADE TODAY NOON
Le Café Parking
Le Café
OPEN
Table for one?
No. Two. I'm waiting for someone else.



Hmm?
Hi... Alison?
I'm Alec
? ... uhh... hello ...?
-Oh! Alec! Right! You're Val's BUTLER!
Oh my god! Did I say "Butler"?
I mean boyfriend.

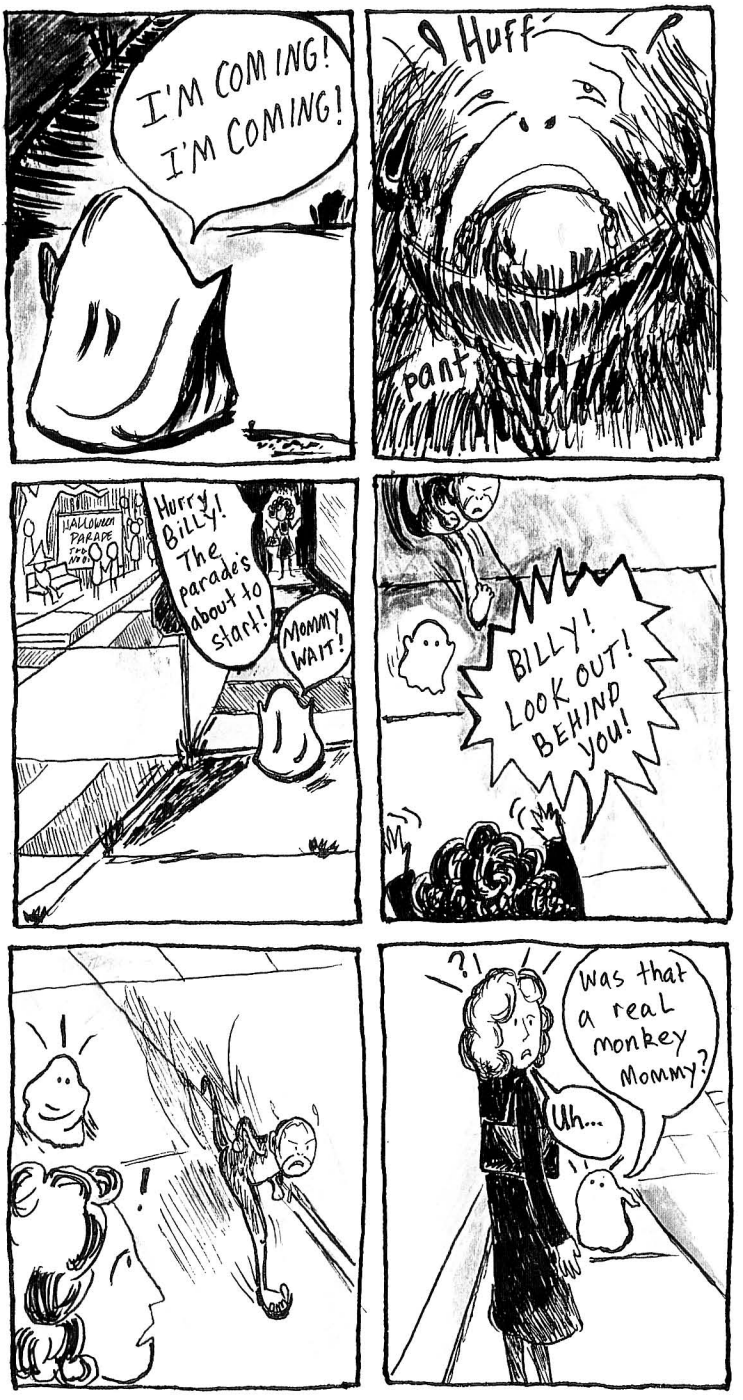
I forgot Val had mentioned the other night that her new boyfriend, Alec, might be joining us for brunch.
WHAT?!
He's a butler?!
Val that's insane!!
No. No! I'm intrigued...
I've never met a real-life butler before...
OR known anyone who's DATED a butler...
I didn't know they could date.
I don't know. I just figured they couldn't, which is stupid...
I mean, it's not like they're members of the clergy or something.

Um, Val's not here yet.
Oh.
Can I give you a hand?
SURE!
That bookstore down the street's having a sale. But they ran out of bags. Careful...
OOOF!
WERB!
FLOOP!
Fuddah!
Flott!
fwatt!
sorry.
No! It's my fault. That's what I get for being so greedy!

This guy's too good-looking to be a butler.
A Biography of
Mao Tse-tung
REVOLUTIO for DUMM
DAS KAPITA
by Karl
The Communist
by
WHAT THE...?
HE'S A COMMUNIST?!
SWEETIE!
VAL!
Hi Sugar!
Alison's not here yet?
She's under the table.

Huh?
Hi VAL!
ALison! What are you DOING down there?
And what's with aLL these BooKs?
Kick
Sweetie, would you be a lamb and get us some drinks?
Sure babe.
Isn't he a DREAMBOAT!!?
Ya Val, He's really nice...
OH MY GOD, ALISON! GUESS WHAT?!!
Yike!

Alec has a cousin, Antonio- he's GORGEOUS! - and we TOTALLY want to set you up with him!!
ISN'T THAT GREAT?!
Um, Val,... I'm really not ready to start dating...
Who said anything about DATING?! teehee!
Seriously, Alison... How long has it been?
Since Paul left me?
Uhh... Let's see... two months?
NO!! ALISON! C'MON! How Looooong has it been... since you,... ... you know...


I'M COMING! I'M COMING!
Huff-
pant
HALLOWEEN PARADE THIS WAY
Hurry BILLY! The parade's about to start!
MOMMY WAIT!
BILLY! LOOK OUT! BEHIND YOU!
?!
Was that a real monkey Mommy?
Uh...

Since I "Made Love"?
Val, I'm sorry,... but that's just NOT a priority for me right now...
Well I think You're in denial!
And if you don't do something about it soon...
ALL that pent-up Frustration is going to BUILD and BUILD...
And you're gonna end up JUMPING the NEXT APE that WALKS BY!!
Now if you'll excuse me...
I have to go powder my nose.

gulp.
Oh Pshaw!
That's ridiculous
Le Café
OPEN
It's almost FUNNY.
ha ha ha
\/crack
Le Café
OPEN!

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Halloween TRIVIA

1. The word 'witch' is derived from the Saxon word "wicca" which means what in English?

2. Some ancient cultures believed that the nose is really an entrance for who?

3. "Baba Yaga" is a cannibal witch originally from what large country?

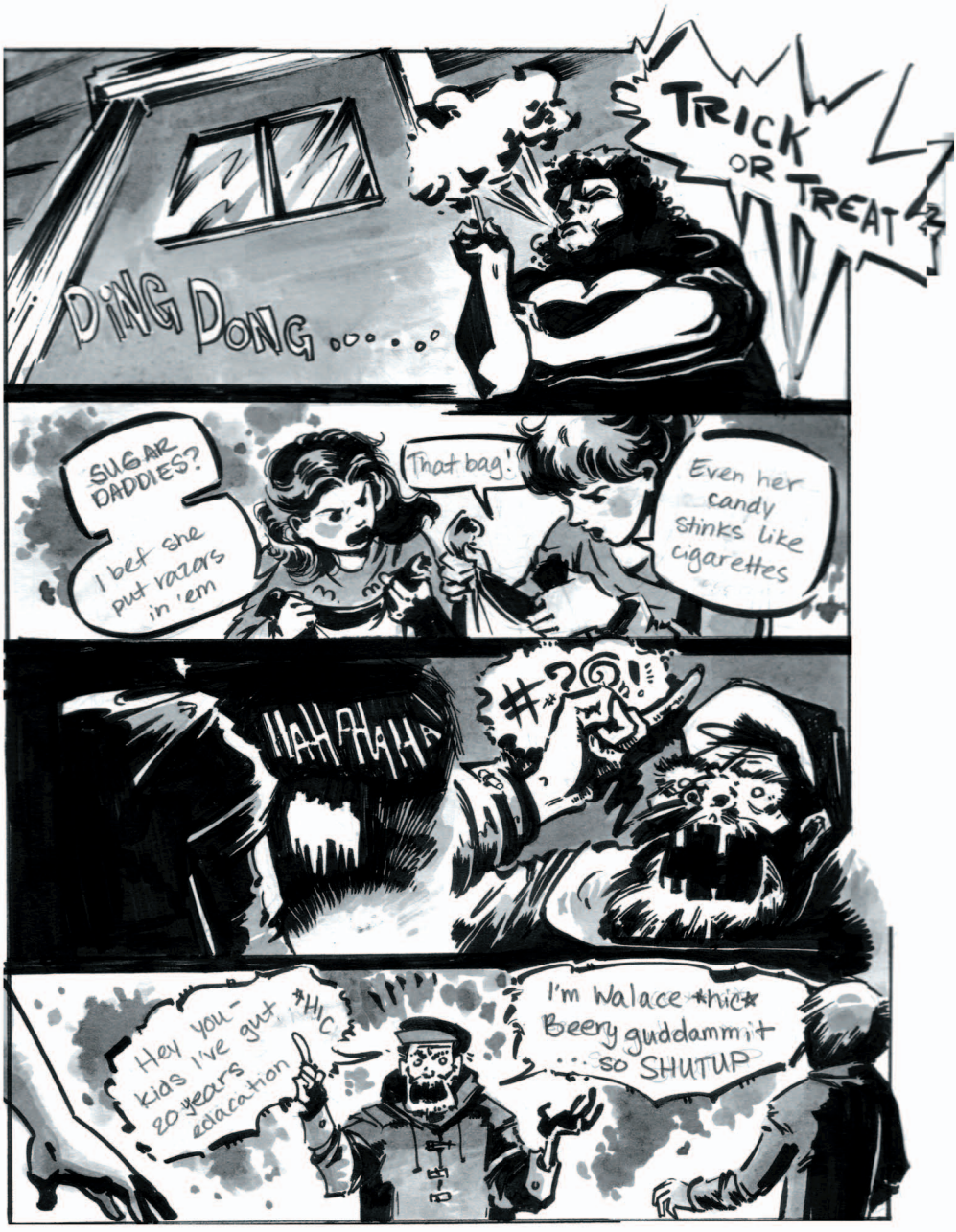
Answers from page 36

1. Snickers
2. Vincent Price
3. Snoopy
4. Victor

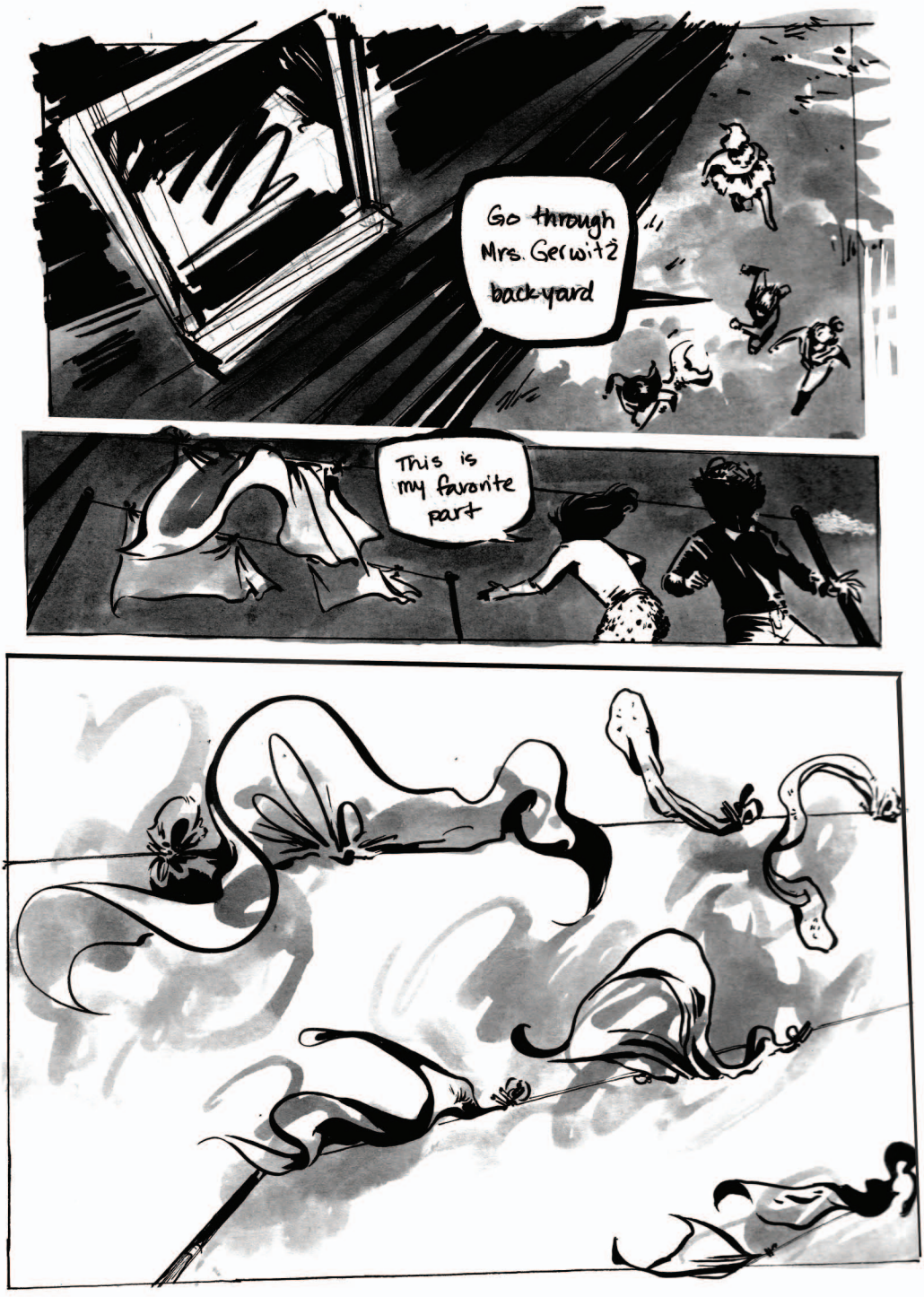
Answers and more Trivia on page 62

VERONICA
HEBARD

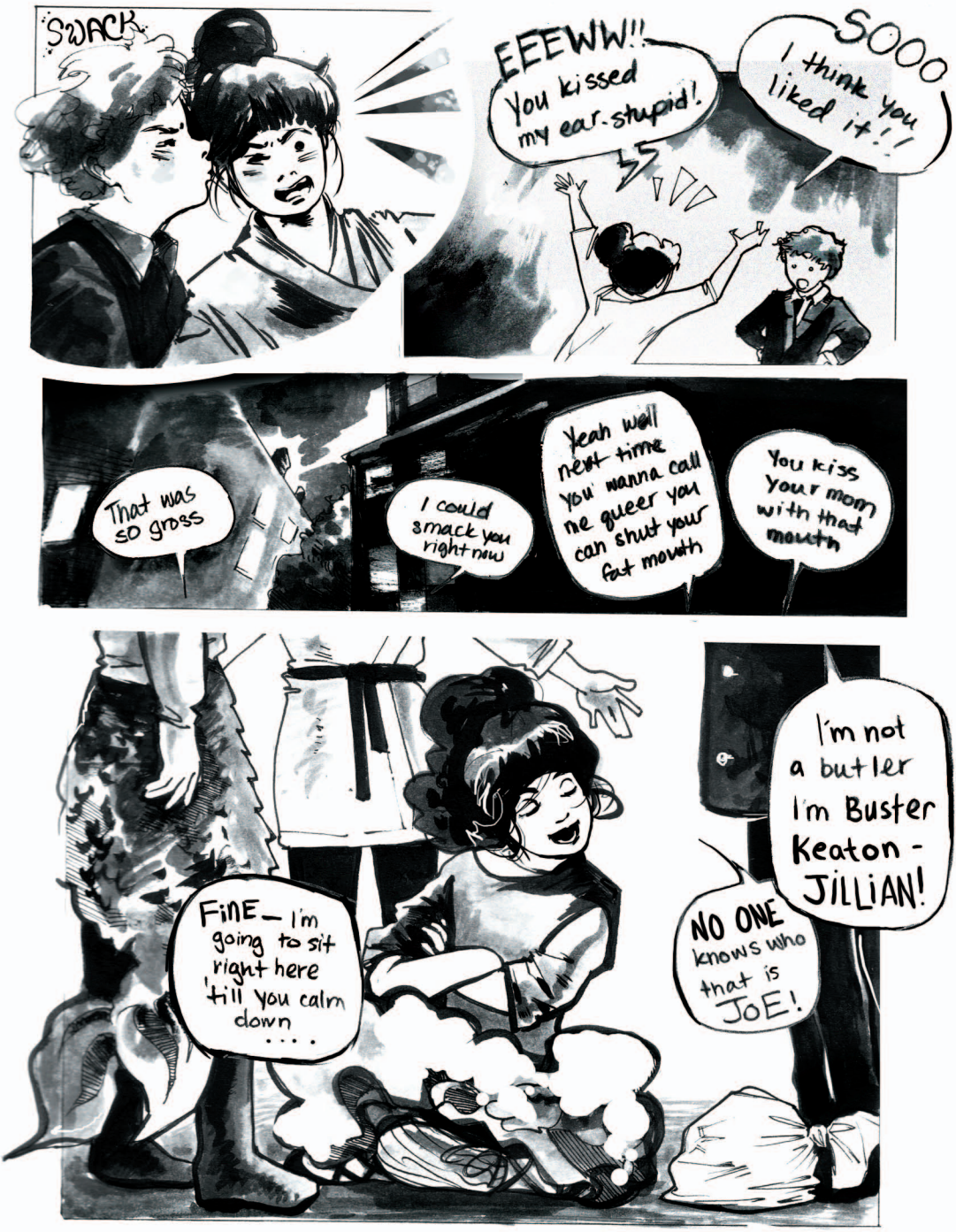
5 bucks says she isn't ready
AH*LEEE*SHAAH*
2B
4C
WHY Do you always gotta be so early?!
HAHAHA
AHaHohh
ohman you look so stupid in that get-up...


DING DONG.....
TRICK OR TREAT
SUGAR DADDIES?
I bet she put razors in 'em
That bag!
Even her candy stinks like cigarettes
HAHAHAHA
#?@!
Hey you- kids I've got 20 years edacation *HIC
I'm Walace *hic* Beery guddammit ...so SHUTUP

Don't you know old movies *HIC* Youuu kids dunnno SHEEET
Hey- Alicia...
AHAHAHAHAHAHAHH...
Hey....


Go through Mrs. Gerwitz back-yard
This is my favorite part

I think the dirty kid likes you, Jill
SHUT UP
HAHA HAA!
Did you even dress up? I think that's just your uniform
Hey! Can it! He's got a stupidder costume—
What is he a butler? It's dumb


SWACK
EEEWW!! You kissed my ear-stupid!
SOOO I think you liked it!!
That was SO gross
I could smack you right now
Yeah well next time you wanna call me queer you can shut your fat mouth
You kiss your mom with that mouth
FINE— I'm going to sit right here 'till you calm down . . . .
NO ONE knows who that is JOE!
I'm not a butler I'm Buster Keaton - JILLIAN!

You know YOU ruin it every year JOE.
Yeah, remember the year you threw up on Veronica?!
YOU GET STUPID·ER
It just hit my shoes
AW those were COOL They lit up an' everything!

Halloween TRIVIA

Did you know? ...

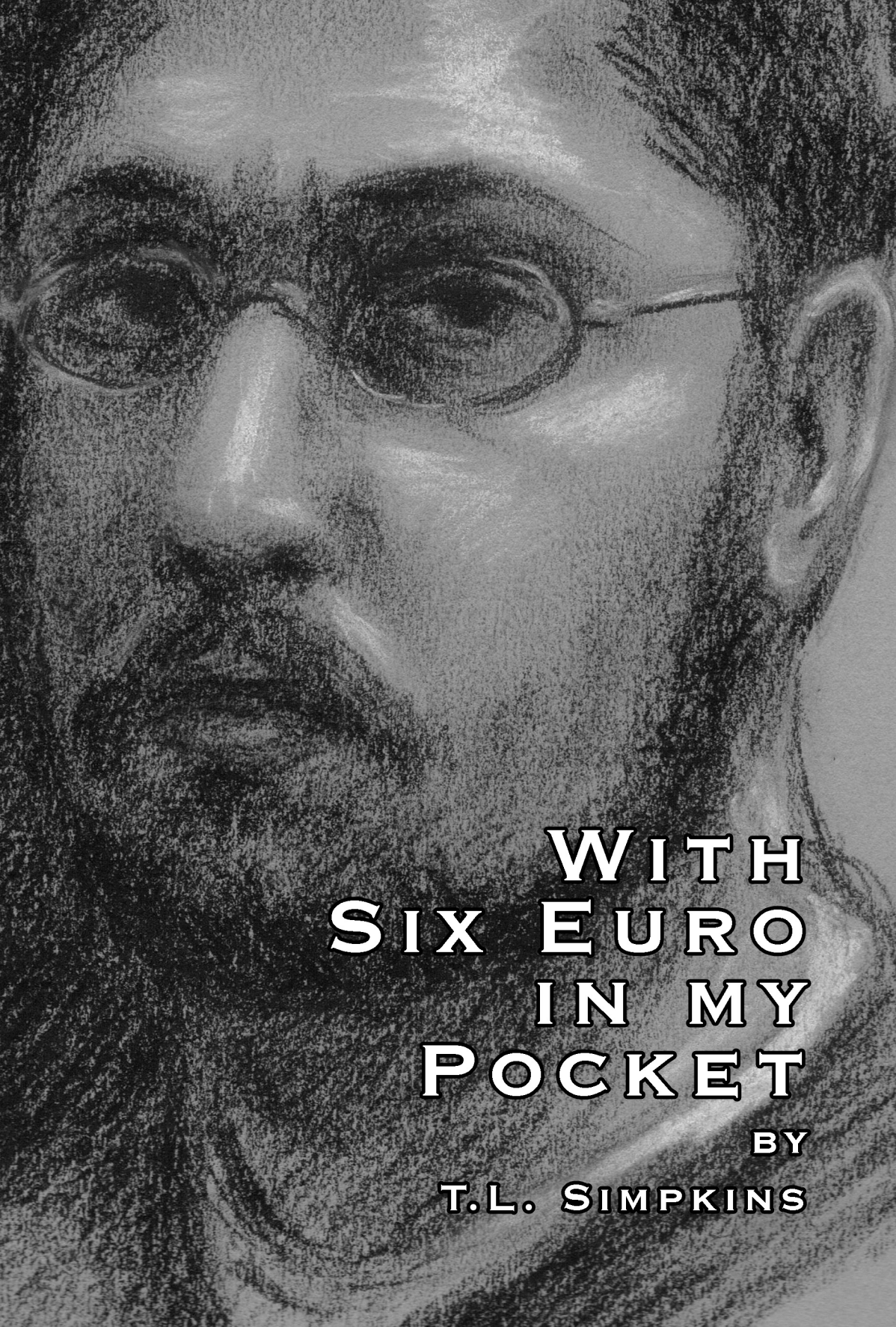
"Poltergeist" is a German term
for "noisy spirit"

In Medievel times, eating a spider was
believed to cure plague or leprosy

Answers from page 53
1."Wise One"
2. Evil Spirits
(this is why we
say "God Bless You"
after a sneeze)
3. Russia

More Trivia
on page 77

TRAVIS
SIMPKINS



With Six Euro in my Pocket

by

T.L. Simpkins

With Six Euro in My Pocket

By

T.L. Simpkins

The coastal village of Doolin rests on the West Coast of Ireland, elevated from the sea by the Cliffs of Moher, and surrounded by Neolithic burial mounds and unlabeled, narrow two lane roads. Innumerable shades of green, peppered at intervals with gray granite outcroppings, are the scenic backdrop. A long journey from any port, by sea, land or air is essential in reaching it. Doolin is unassuming, possessing little allure for tourists beyond it's proximity to the Cliffs. It consists of a restaurant, post office/general store, and two pubs... only the bare essentials.

Being an American accustomed to right hand driving, trying to maneuver a car with everything backward, including the car controls proved quite challenging. The long trek to Doolin alone provided me with enough practice to proclaim a mild competence in left-hand navigation. I was no expert, however. I arrived in Doolin on a late summer evening, the rear bumper of my rental car falling off, and countless scratches etched upon the passenger side of the vehicle. I viewed the scratches as battle scars, inflicted by grueling training exercises. I felt accomplished, attaining the mere goal of pulling into one of the free spots above the old stone bridge that spans the creek. I got out of the car and breathed in the cool night air. Despite the fact that it was July, it could not have been over sixty degrees. The chimneys from the houses and cottages exuded an eclectic aroma of wood, coal, and peat. I lit up a cigarette and exhaled, tilting my head back, the smoke from my lungs getting lost in the descending fog.

It was about eight o'clock when I rambled under

the unimpressive marquis of McDermott's Pub, illuminated by one flickering light bulb, and into the bar. A sign above the door read, "*Failte*," translating to "Welcome." Like all of Ireland the bar was smoke-free. Only the smell of burning wood from the cast iron stove was flagrant. The odors of spilled beer and whiskey were present, pleasantly, but not overwhelmingly so. With the exception of city pubs, Irish bars don't have deejays or jukeboxes, always live music. Music comes natural to the Celts, as natural as breathing or the pumping of the heart. Hence, as soon as I entered the pub, even before I entered, my ears were stroked with the sounds of the fiddle, guitar, bodhran and mandolin. Countless voices of both performers and patrons were singing in unison, from the gut, not the throat- *Johnny Lad*, *Fare Thee Well Enniskillen, Finnegan's Wake*... all great old tunes.

It was an old pub, no newer than the late nineteenth century. Thick wooden construction and a stone slab floor provided a feeling of solidity. The bar was L-shaped; hand made of dark mahogany. Random items were tacked and nailed, dangling from the beams of the low ceiling. Lot's of bric-a-brac- old oars, fishing nets, farming tools, muskets, and rusted tin advertising signs. A small television, the sound of which was drowned out by the music, was showing highlights from the day's hurling match of County Clare vs. County Cork. I smiled at hearing the soothing sound of all the Irish accents, conversing in both Gaelic and English, all carefree.

I grabbed a stool and sat down, belly up to the bar. I ordered a pint of Bulmer's Cider and a bowl of Irish stew. I felt famished and somewhat weary after a long day in the bogs, searching for inspiration from nature for the book I was writing. I had not passed an ATM in two days. I reached in my pocket and felt a crumpled bill and a coin. I assured myself that all was well. I was certain I had at least eleven Euro.

"You can start a tab and pay later, lad. If that's what it is you have on your mind," the bartender told me. "Makes it easier, you know. If you plan on sitting a while." He was a young guy, no older than his late twenties, with spiky, metrosexual hair and a turned up collar. He looked like a primped and polished ragamuffin.

"Sounds good." I replied.

"Ah, we have an American in our midst," he said with a grin. "Welcome. You can start a tab, but we don't take switch here."

"Huh?"

"Switch. You know... switch. Oh fuck, I'm sorry. You don't understand. I mean we don't take credit cards. That's what we call 'em here. Switch."

"Oh." I replied, nodding. "That's ok. I'll start a tab anyway."

I listened to the music, calm and contentedly. The pounding rhythms soothed me, allowing the bowl of stew and the contents of the pint to slide gently into my gut. I spun around on the stool and perused the clientele. They weren't so much characters, as they were caricatures. A sweaty guy, obviously hammered, was boasting in a thick Irish accent about things he had probably never done. He had a glass of stout in one hand and seemed to be grabbing at an imaginary pole with the other. Every time he waved his arms beer would slosh out of his glass and onto the floor as well as other patrons. His shirt was unbuttoned, exposing his round hairy beer belly. A middle-aged woman in a ripped T-shirt was running around giving sloppy kisses to anyone who was willing to receive one. Two men were dancing to the music, arms around each other's shoulders, both holding pint glasses. Occasionally they'd stop and smash their glasses together over their heads, losing half the contents in the process. There was more beer on them and the floor at their feet than there was in their glasses. Others were sitting on

benches and trunks drinking coffee, slapping their knees and stomping their feet as the band wailed away. The stone floor gleamed, wet with beer and whiskey, as the light from scattered bar lights and low hanging lamps shined down. The overall image would have made a splendid photograph.

My stomach full, I had a hankering for a cigarette. I went outside and sat down on a wooden bench. Despite the fact that it was missing a few slats, it was very comfortable. I could still hear the music quite well. It was growing colder. Exhaling, I couldn't differentiate between the steam of my breath and the smoke. I dreaded the idea of curling up in the sleeping bag on the backseat of the car on a night like this. It gets too damn cold the closer you get to the sea. If I didn't get too drunk, I could drive a ways inland and park, or I could seek out a cheap Inn or a youth hostel. I figured I'd go with the flow. The night was still young. I leaned back on the bench and submitted to the draw of reflection.

When I left the United States I figured I'd be homesick within a couple weeks. I thought I'd yearn to hear the squeals of the "T" train in Boston, see the eclectic faces of the passengers, miss the Museums, the culture, the girls, the college parties in Worcester, the potholes, the restaurants, the high-rise buildings, the autumn leaves...

I looked across the way at a pasture illuminated by the moon, transfixed under an opaque sky. Old barns, troughs, and fences seemed to glow in the foggy moonlight. Cows and sheep were grazing, sleeping, mating, just doing the things cows and sheep do. (A few male varieties of each were thrown in as well. Bulls are necessary, after all.) I breathed in the damp air. I heard a glass break on the floor inside the pub and everyone laughing. Do I miss America? I asked myself. Not right now, was my reply. I love the Irish people. They are tied to the earth, and sprung from it. When

they turn the soil with tools or their bare hands they are cultivating all of life, from the ancient to the contemporary. And they're all about living. They don't bother with frivolous matters. Truly morose Irishmen are few and far between.

I let out a sigh, snuffed my cigarette and went back into the pub. I reclaimed my seat at the bar. "A pint of Guinness." I shouted to the bartender.

He filled a glass from the tap and let it overflow. He wiped the base of the glass with a cloth and set it down in front of me. The beer was still foaming, frothing over the brim. The first sip was bittersweet, half foam and half beer. I was not seated more than a few minutes before a woman set herself down on the stool beside me. She looked to be about thirty-five. She had plain but appealing features- reddish hair, thin lips, full hips, and her breasts looked firm and snug underneath her wool sweater. She wore an odd perfume, very tart. I looked at her hand; she was wearing a wedding ring. With older women, I always check their hand.

"Oh!" she groaned. "My feet are killing me. My car broke down. Lately I've been walking everywhere." She had a beautiful, crystalline Irish accent.

"Those aren't the best shoes for walking," I said, looking down at her feet.

"I was right!" She exclaimed. "As soon as I saw you I knew you weren't a paddy. I thought you might be German, but I was wrong in that judgement too, too hasty. Sorry, where are you from?"

"I'm an American."

"That was my second guess. Where in America?"

"Not far from Boston."

"Oh, I have a cousin who lives in Boston! I went to visit her once. It's a nice area... well sort of. A bit on the dirty side, wouldn't you agree?"

"A bit, yes." I laughed.

"So what brings you to Ireland, old *Eire*? Have you been here long?"

"No, not too long, I've been here a few weeks now. I actually came to get inspiration for a book I'm writing."

"You don't say. A book, ay... what kind? Does it take place here in Ireland?"

"A novel, and no, strangely enough it has absolutely nothing to do with Ireland."

"That is quite strange, yes." She said, rubbing her chin and neck. "Hmm... I must say, to write a novel seems like a noble thing to do."

I laughed out loud. "Wow, it's the first time anyone's said that!"

"Oh, I should certainly hope not. Why is that do you suppose?"

"Just the American mindset, I guess. Back home, if you're not a doctor, a lawyer, a businessman, or have a surefire trade, something without risk, something that guarantees a steady income, people think you're a bum. If you tell someone you're an artist or a writer and you don't have much to show for it, they think you're as naive as can be. America can be very shallow, money driven, everything is superficial."

"Well, that's ignorance for you. Anyone, who thinks like that, you just have to say 'fuck 'em.' Right?" She said, reaching over and placing her hand on mine. "So, you like Europe, do you? Is it more your cup o' tea?"

"I think so." I replied. "Everything here seems more honest and easy going. I love how each person has their own way of talking. Like you. You don't speak like a typical paddy, every other word being, 'fuck.' You speak very clear and proper, your accent. I like that."

"I'm an exception, you see. That's very observant of you. That's because I'm only half-Irish. The other half is Scottish. I was raised in England. For

such a small group of islands, the dialects are quite numerous. Each part of the U.K. has it's own style of speaking. I'm sort of a mixture of them all."

"It's a lovely mixture." I said. "What's your name?"

She turned her head and cupped her hand over her mouth. "My name? Oh, um... sorry. I'm Maureen."

"That's a beautiful name." I waited for her to ask mine. She didn't. I felt no need to volunteer it.

"Speaking of beautiful," she said, still holding my hand. "Your hand is very soft, and you're quite handsome if you don't mind me saying so."

"Thank you. You're very attractive as well... delicate."

"Oh, how sweet of you." She released my hand, rubbed my shoulder with a few short strokes, she then folded her hands together on the bar. A loud crash sounded to our right and we both turned our heads in its direction. The open-shirt gent had fallen to the floor, toppling three other people with him. They fell like a cluster of oaks in the midst of deforestation, lots of rustling and cracking. Broken glasses, a table and several chairs lay on their sides on the floor. They all got up, dusted themselves off, slapped each other's shoulders and laughed uproariously.

"Are there any hostels in town, do you know?" I asked.

"Oh," she said. "Do you have no place to stay?"

"Nothing substantial." I replied.

"Well..." she rolled her eyes. "This may sound a bit forward, but you can stay with me tonight, if you'd like. Of course, if you'd rather not..."

"No, well, uh..." I was flustered. "Aren't you married?" I looked at her ring, gesturing with my eyes.

"Oh!" She clasped one hand over the other that bore the wedding band. "No, no, no. I mean, I *was* married. I'm separated now. Sometimes I put it on for sentimental reasons, nostalgia, you might say. I guess I

forgot to take it off. No, I'm unhitched."

"In that case, sure. If you don't mind an overnight guest."

"It's no problem at all." She placed her hand on my thigh. "I only ask one thing in return."

"What's that?"

"Be a dear and buy me a pint of Guinness."

I ordered her beer and the bartender poured it. He looked at me with a raised eyebrow, an odd expression, but didn't say anything. Maureen sucked down half the glass in a matter of seconds. Her drinking seemed ravenous, like it was long awaited. Her eyes glistened as she leaned back contented, licking the foam from her upper lip.

"Ahhhh!" She sighed. "Cheers! Nothing beats a pint of Guinness. I don't care if it's ice cold or warm as piss. Any way it's presented is pure heaven. There are few things that make life worth livin', but a pint is one of them. You ever drink a warm pint?"

"Yes, but not voluntarily." I responded.

"Oh, you are ever so cute!" She pinched my cheek and leaned her shoulder into mine. "Why don't you pay the tab. I'll finish this off and run to the powder room. Then we'll be set for a romp."

I signaled for my check and the barkeep brought it over. He tossed it onto the bar in front of me. The tab ran an even nine Euro. Perfect, I thought to myself. I can drop the ten Euro bill and still have one Euro left over. I reached into my pocket and extracted the bill and coin. I looked down at the contents of my hand in dismay. I was holding a five Euro bill and the Euro coin. Six lousy Euro! I cursed myself for not checking beforehand. I started to panic, sweat forming on my brow.

"Everything alright, dear?" Maureen asked.

"Yeah, fine... I just... I just gotta... I'll be right back!" I bounded across the slippery stone floor of the pub to the gent's toilet. I was operating on instinct. My

body had one goal, one reflex- to escape. I hoped to crawl out a window in the bathroom and make a fast break for my car. I skidded into the bathroom, nearly wiping out on the floor. My heart sank. I was staring at a solid mahogany paneled wall- no window. A barrel-chested Scotsman in a kilt was the only other occupant of the lavatory. He was swaying, dick in hand, pissing onto the floor, singing along to the old songs being performed by the band. His words were slurred and his eyes looked vacant. He spotted me and shouted, "Don't'cha be lookin' up me kilt, ye sonofabitch!"

I was at a loss for an idea of what to do. I was unsure of the consequences for not being able to pay... an American alone in a foreign country, who knows the severity of the penalty? I was in the middle of nowhere. I expected I'd get roughed up at the very least. My stomach started quaking. I felt as though I might vomit. I sprinted into a nearby stall and bent over the commode. Looking down at the floor, feeling nauseous, I saw a mirage. I spied a ten Euro note lying on the floor of the stall, resting thoroughly soaked in a puddle of mixed bodily fluids. I closed my eyes, took in a deep breath of foul air and reopened them. I looked back down to ensure that I was not hallucinating. I cringed, squatted down and liberated the bill from the puddle, pinching it between my thumb and forefinger. I held it up and watched it hang heavily, dripping. The ten Euro note was indeed real... real and putrid. I exited the stall with a universal calm. I pushed my palm against the button for the hand-drier and held the wet note underneath. The bill was still wet when I emerged from the bathroom.

Maureen was not seated at the bar. I figured she had gone to the ladies room, like she said she was going to. I slapped the soggy ten Euro note down on the bar next to my check and told the bartender to keep the change. He picked it up and seemed mildly surprised at its wetness, but did not seem utterly repulsed. I watched

the door of the woman's toilet. I waited ten minutes... fifteen minutes... twenty minutes.

"What happened to Maureen?" I asked the bartender, confused.

"Who?" He asked, equally befuddled.

"Maureen. The woman who was sitting next to me here a little while ago."

"Oh her! Maureen... is that what she told you her name is?" He placed his hand flat on the bar in front of me. He looked me dead in the eyes, displaying that same raised eyebrow expression. "I suppose she also offered to take you home with her? Ha! Christ Almighty! Another one fell for it! The things that bitch will say for a free pint!" He walked away, laughing boisterously. "Don't feel too wretched, lad. You aren't the first to get reeled in by that one. You won't be the last either."

"Are you shittin' me?" I exclaimed.

"No, no. I'm afraid not lad. That bloody lass is in here a few times a week pullin' the same old trick. She had you marked, Yank!"

"Fuck!" I collapsed onto the barstool, my elbows on the bar, my head resting in my hands. I sighed. "I can't believe it."

"Oh, c'mon now. T'ain't as bad as all that. It was only a pint she wanted, she didn't roll you for any money, did she?"

"No, it's not that. It's just... Why couldn't she have just asked me to buy her a pint? I would have. She didn't have to say all that other shit."

"True, but where would the fun be in that, eh laddy? It's a game to her, understand."

"I suppose. I, I...." I replied. "Give me a Jameson straight."

"That's it, there you go. You get the idea now. Wash those troubles down the gullet. No skirt is worth the misery. Have a whiskey or two, smoke a fag and relax. A fag is a cigarette, by the way."

I downed the whiskey in one gulp. “I know what it means. Another,” I said. He poured it and started to walk away. “Ah, ah, ah!” I stopped him. I threw back the shot and pointed to my empty glass again.

I wobbled out of the pub and into the damp night. I staggered across the road and leaned on the wooden fence, behind which resided the cows and other livestock. The whole area reeked of typical farm smells. They looked so peaceful, the cows, very serene. They knew their purpose... and worry, misery, degradation, hypocrisy, and shallowness were not a part of it. I thought of Maureen and the scent of her perfume. At that particular moment, I preferred the aroma of the cow manure.

I lit a cigarette and rested all my weight on the fence. I had rambling thoughts, but one seemed to keep coming through the haze repeatedly- how things always seem to start off strong and promising then fizzle out abruptly. The night with Maureen, my life in America, and surely in the near future, my life in Europe... they all began energetically, focused, then inexplicably faded away. No explanation, no warning, just gone. I blew a large puff of smoke out in front of me. It rose steadily then was weakened and carried away by the cold breeze. I looked at the chimneys of the pubs, cottages, houses, and shacks of Doolin. The same thing was true. The smoke rose from the bricks in a strong cloud, diluted and dispersed, and was scattered to oblivion by the breeze. How appropriate I thought. What is everything if not smoke being carried off by the wind?

“To hell with it all!” I said out loud. It was too late, too cold, and I was too drunk to start getting philosophical. I knew I had a long, cold, restless night ahead of me. I glanced toward my car. The sleeping bag seemed to be calling my name from the backseat, singing in a long, welcoming, monotonous chant. It

sounded remarkably like an Irish folk song.

THE END

STOP BEING A MOOCHER! YOU CAN GET YOUR OWN
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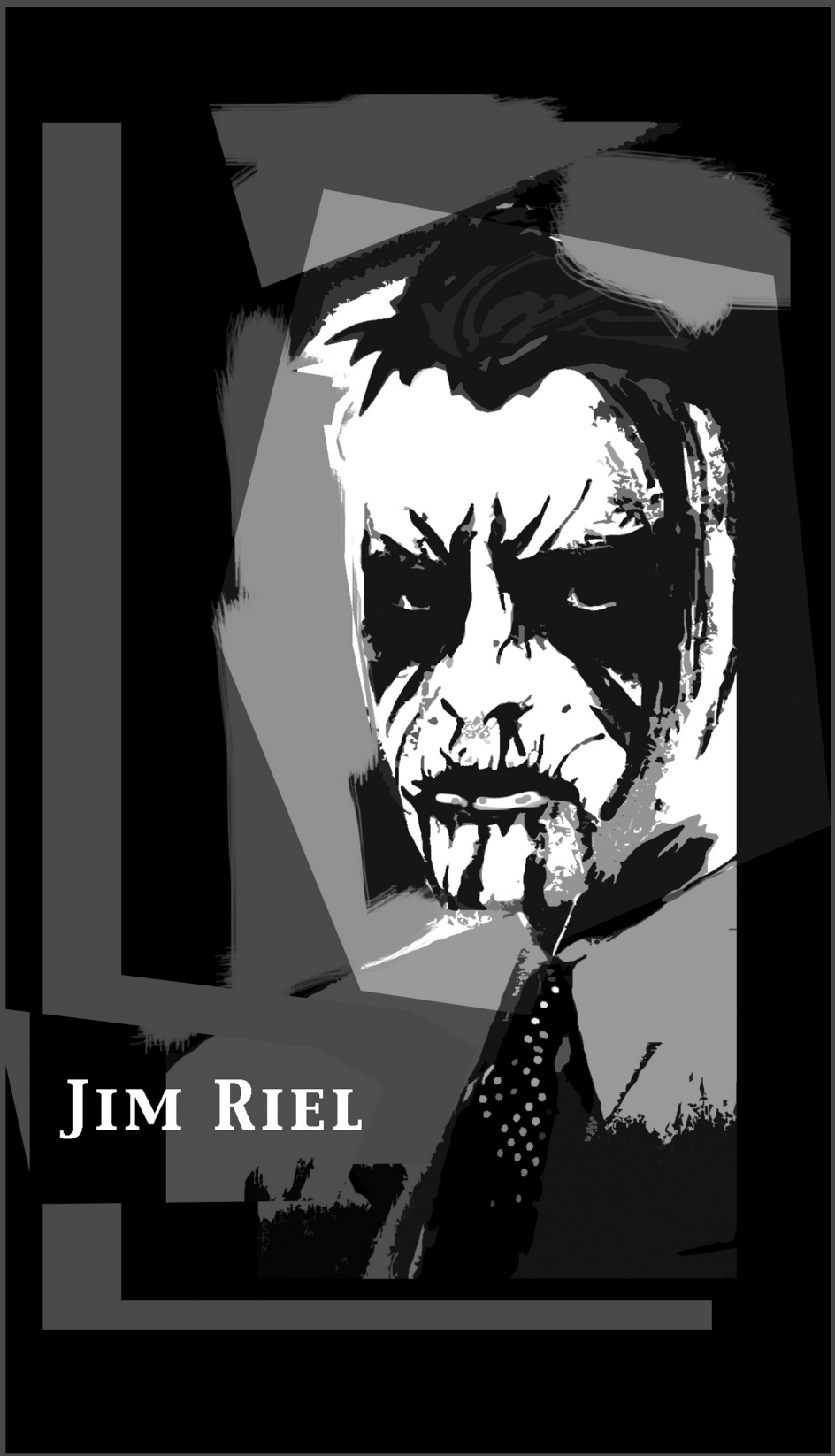
Halloween TRIVIA

1. What color will a candle flame turn if a ghost is near?

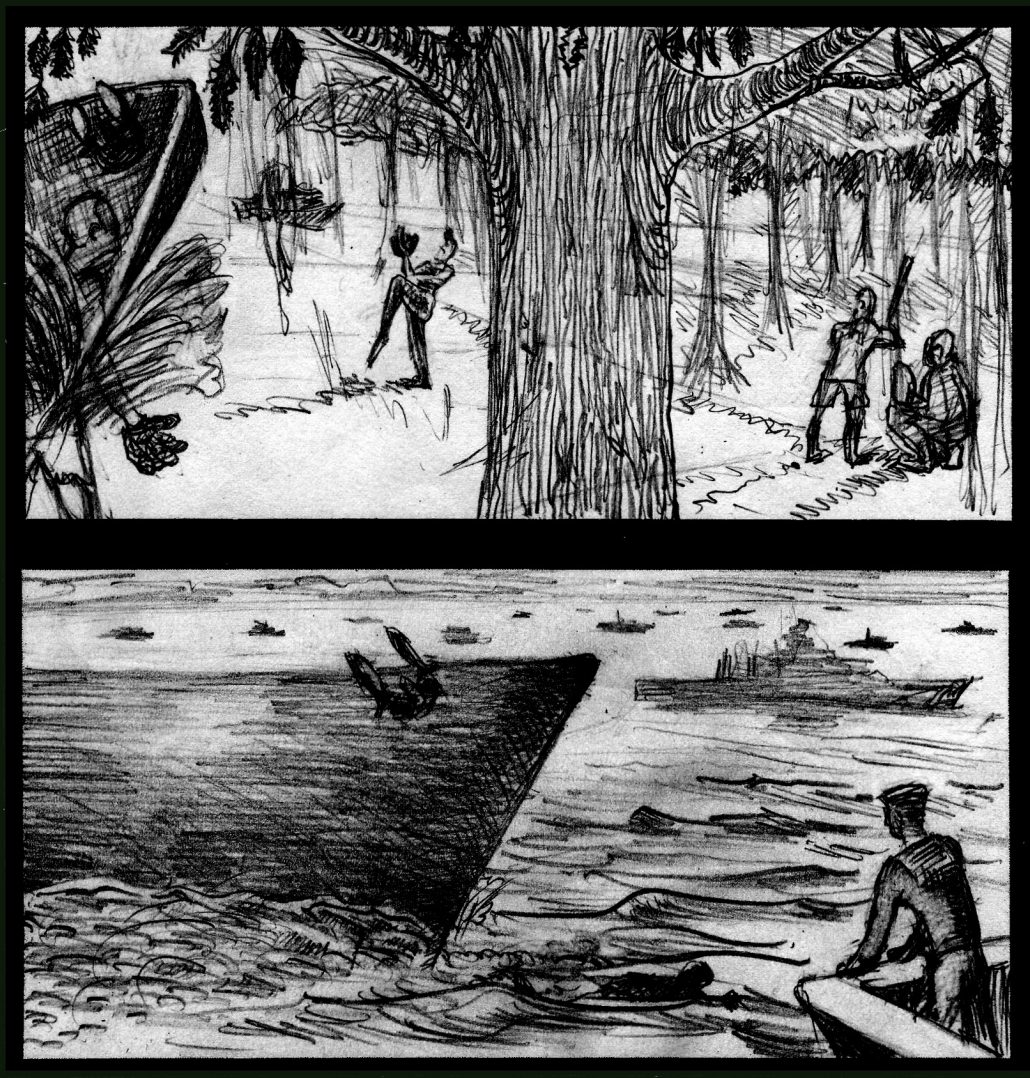
2. What holiday is celebrated the day after Halloween?

3. What charity collects money on Halloween for children?

Answers and more Trivia on page 87


Jim Riel

WISH I KNEW WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT... OR WHO HE'S TALKING TO...



MAN OVERBOARD, SKIP!

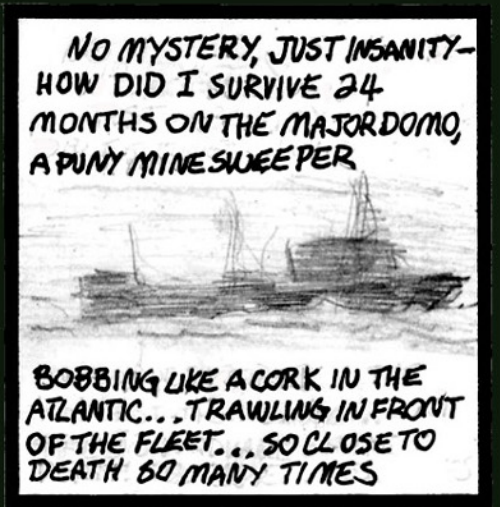
GUESS SO...
JESUS! A KRAUT. TOO LATE FOR HIM!

FISH SURE DID A NUMBER ON HIM. NEVER SEEN NOTHIN' LIKE THAT BEFORE.
YEAH MUST'VE COME FROM A SUBMARINE. HEARD THEY SUNK DIVE OUT HERE LAST WEEK.

TAKE A LOOK AT THIS, HALEY, COUPLE OF FISH SQUIRMING AROUND IN HIS GUT.
NO THANKS! DON'T NEED TO BE HAUNTED BY THAT IMAGE FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.

JUST A YOUNG GUY LIKE US...
WRONG PLACE WRONG TIME... NO MYSTERY ABOUT IT...

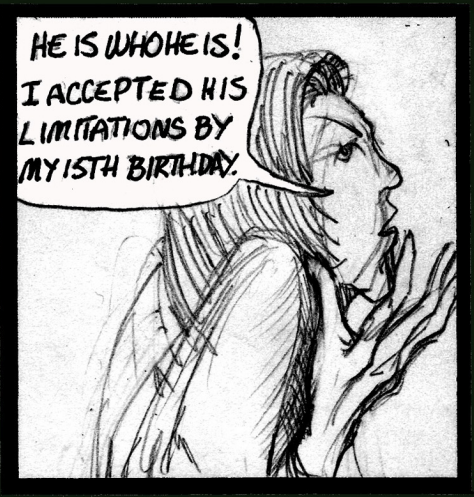
...WRONG PLACE
WRONG TIME...

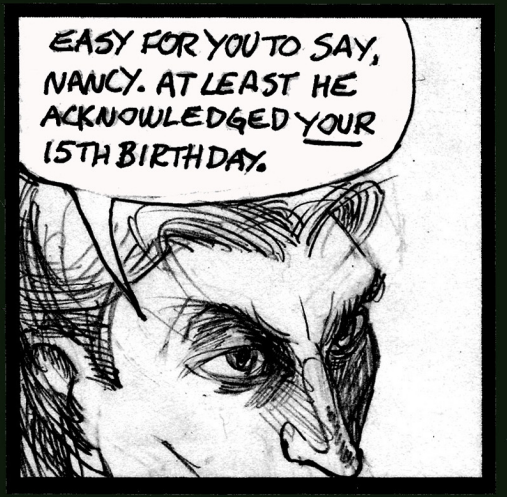

NO MYSTERY, JUST INSANITY— HOW DID I SURVIVE 24 MONTHS ON THE MAJORDOMO, A PUNY MINESWEEPER
BOBBING LIKE A CORK IN THE ATLANTIC... TRAWLING IN FRONT OF THE FLEET... SO CLOSE TO DEATH SO MANY TIMES

HE MIGHT LAST THE NIGHT—A WEEK—WHO KNOWS? HE WAS IN BAD SHAPE WHEN HE WAS BROUGHT IN.

LIKE THAT WAS OUR FAULT? WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHERE HE WAS LIVING... HE WAS NOT THE MOST INVOLVED FATHER. RIGHT, SIS?

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY I'M HERE.
OH DAVID—GET OVER IT!


HE IS WHO HE IS! I ACCEPTED HIS LIMITATIONS BY MY 15TH BIRTHDAY.


EASY FOR YOU TO SAY, NANCY. AT LEAST HE ACKNOWLEDGED YOUR 15TH BIRTHDAY.

DADDY?
DADDY, CAN YOU HEAR ME?
DON'T KEEP FIGHTING...
TIME TO LET GO...

Halloween TRIVIA

Did you know ...

In 1988 Debbie Gibson attempted to hold a Halloween seance to contact Sid Viscious and Liberace

In the U.S, Consumer Reports calculated we spend roughly $2 billion a year on Halloween candy alone

Answers from page 77

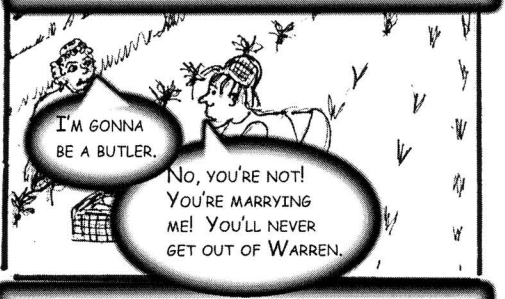
1. Blue
2. All Saint's Day
3. UNICEF

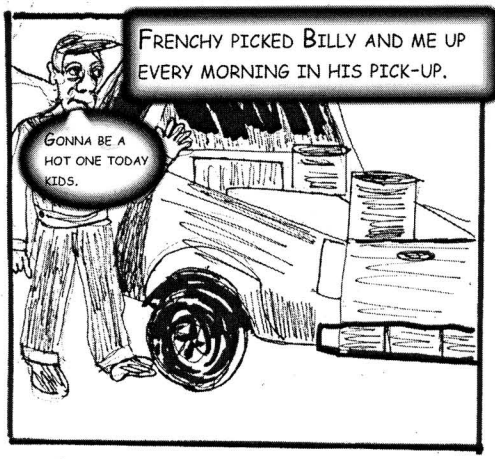
More Trivia on page 97

Barbara Kimball

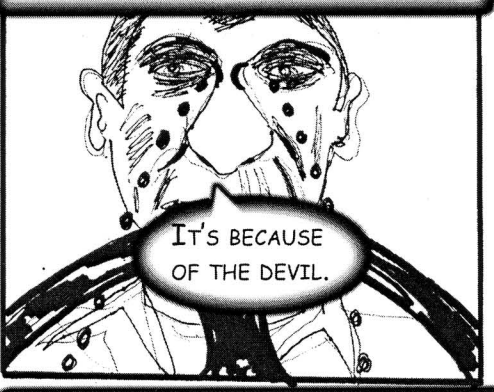
I PRACTICED BEING A BUTLER AS I GREW UP IN RURAL WARREN, MA.

THIS WAS 1985, AND MY MOTHER SAID I WAS PROMISED TO BILLY, WHO LIVED NEXT DOOR. TO TRAIN TO BE THE WIFE OF A FARMER, SHE SAID I MUST WORK ALL SUMMER FOR MAURICE "FRENCHY" THERIAULT, THE MARKET GARDENER IN TOWN.



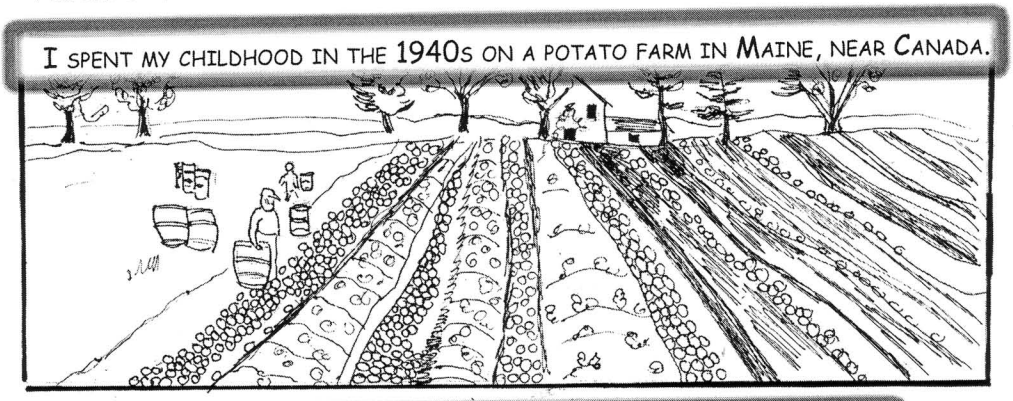


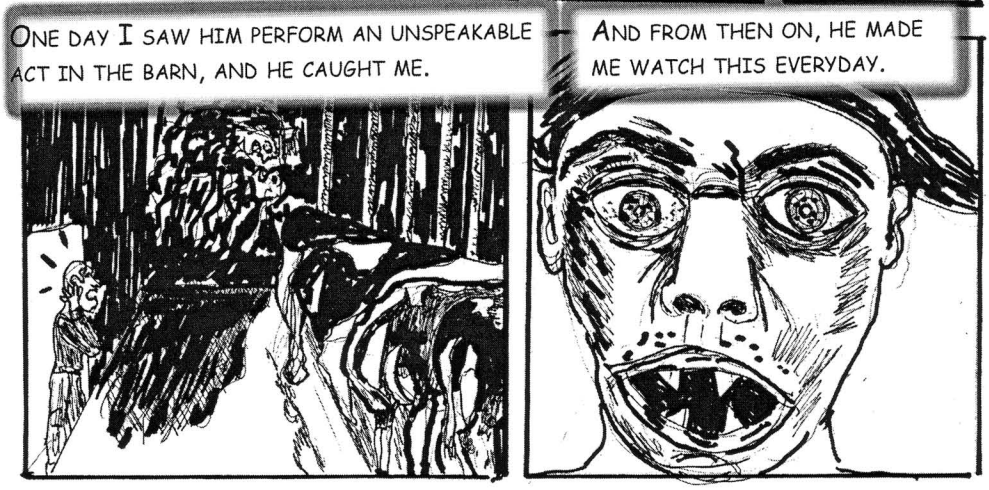
ALWAYS PRACTICING MY SKILLS AS A SOLICITOUS BUTLER, I ASKED FRENCHY ONE MORNING WHY HIS EYES BLED.



AND THAT'S WHEN FRENCHY BEGAN TO TELL HIS STORY, ABOUT HOW HE HAD UNWITTINGLY INVITED THE DEVIL INTO HIS LIFE.

FRENCHY SAID THE DEVIL CAME TO HELP HIM WORK TOO HARD AS A CHILD....



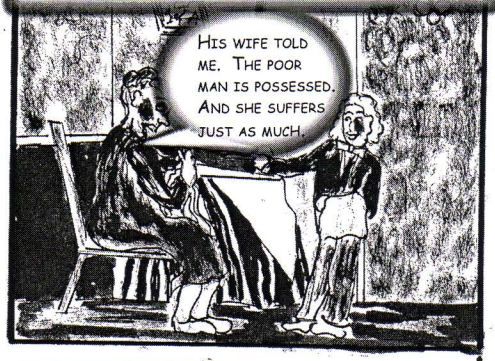


YOU STUPID BASTARD! YOU CAN'T EVEN START AN ENGINE!
HE CHARGED ME LIKE A BULL.
I WAS DAZED, BLEEDING.
I'D RATHER WORK FOR THE DEVIL THAN TO WORK FOR YOU!
AND FROM THAT MOMENT ON, I HAD SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH. EVEN DAD TOLD ME TO SLOW DOWN. HE DIDN'T WANT TO WEAR OUT HIS WORKHORSE.
BUT ON THE DAY I TURNED 18, I ENLISTED TO ESCAPE. DAD GOT TO THE RECRUITER.
SORRY, SON, BUT YOUR DAD NEEDS YOU.
SO ON THE DAY I TURNED 21, I LEFT, NEVER TO WORK FOR THAT BASTARD AGAIN. I WANDERED, GOT MARRIED, GOT DIVORCED, THEN REMARRIED. NANCY AND I MOVED HERE TO WARREN, AND MY STRANGE LIFE JUST KEPT GETTING STRANGER.

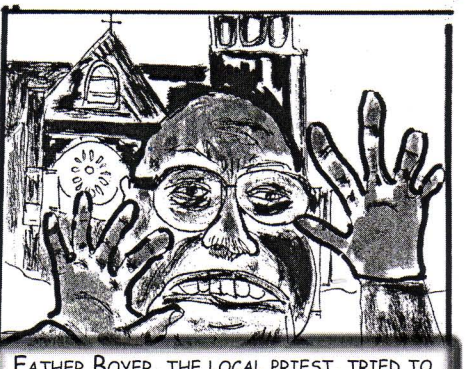
I HAD TO INTERRUPT HIM AT THIS POINT BECAUSE THE TRUCK WAS LEAVING....

ERRRR, FRENCHY?
ISN'T THAT YOU DRIVING AWAY?
THAT NIGHT I WAS IN THE LIBRARY. I TOLD MY LIBRARIAN MY NEW WORD: DOPPLEGANGER.
THAT'S MY GHOSTLY DOUBLE. MY DOPPLEGANGER.
DOPPLEGANGER MY ASS! THAT IDIOT BLAMES EVERYTHING ON THE DEVIL INSTEAD OF HIMSELF.
TOMATOES
HE HAS EPILECTIC FITS AND HE REFUSES TO TAKE MEDICINE!
HE'S A LOUSY FARMER, NEVER FERTILIZES, AND HE REWIRES EVERYTHING, WHICH THEN CATCHES ON FIRE! THAT'S NOT THE DEVIL!

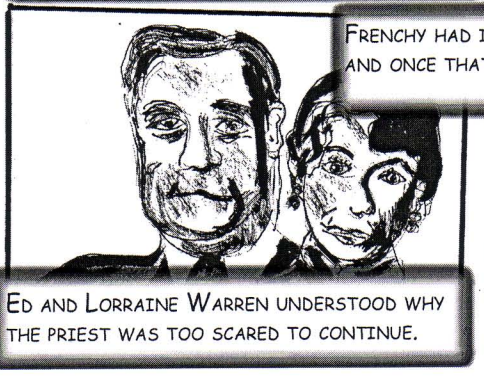
I WENT HOME TO PRACTICE MY BUTLERING SKILLS AND TOLD MOM ABOUT THE DOPPLEGANGER.



MEANWHILE, FRENCHY'S TRUCK BURST INTO FLAMES AND FRIENDS SPLASHED HIM WITH "HOLY" TAP WATER TO OUST THE DEMON.

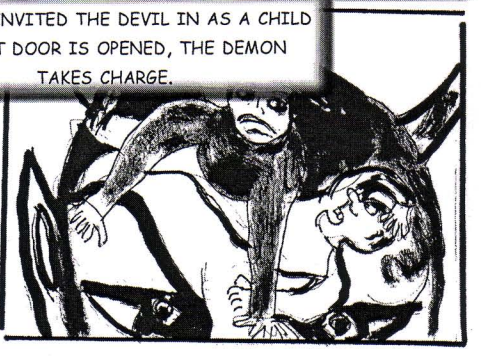


FATHER BOYER, THE LOCAL PRIEST, TRIED TO EXORCISE HIM, BUT WITH NO SUCCESS, SO FR. BOYER CALLED IN TWO DEMONOLOGISTS.

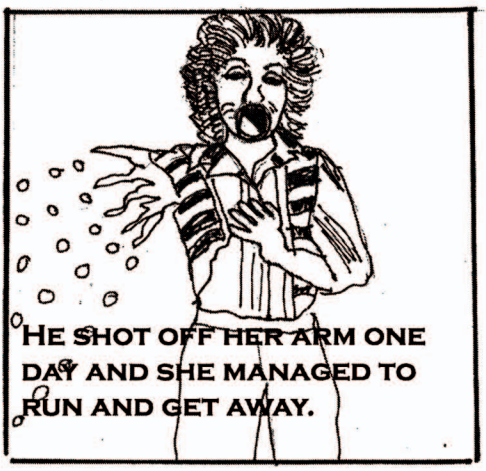


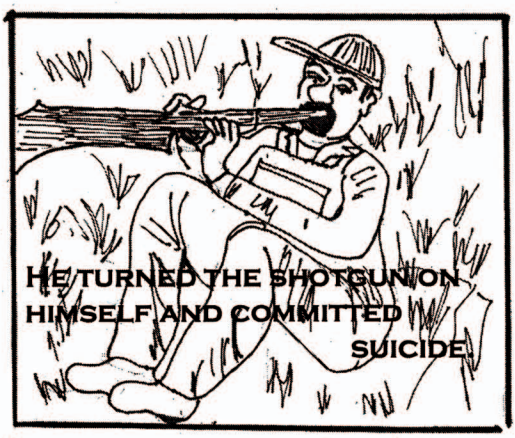
ED AND LORRAINE WARREN UNDERSTOOD WHY THE PRIEST WAS TOO SCARED TO CONTINUE.

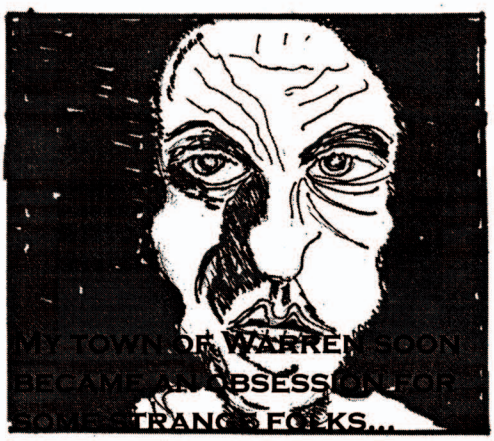
FRENCHY HAD INVITED THE DEVIL IN AS A CHILD AND ONCE THAT DOOR IS OPENED, THE DEMON TAKES CHARGE.



DESPITE ALL THE ACCUSATIONS, NANCY STUCK WITH FRENCHY.


HE SHOT OFF HER ARM ONE DAY AND SHE MANAGED TO RUN AND GET AWAY.


HE TURNED THE SHOTGUN ON HIMSELF AND COMMITTED SUICIDE.


MY TOWN OF WARREN SOON BECAME AN OBSESSION FOR SOME STRANGE FOLKS...

...WHO CONTINUE TO HAUNT FRENCHY'S OLD PLACE, DESPITE THE PRESENCE OF NEW OWNERS. AS FOR ME, I GOT OUT, NEVER TO RETURN.
DEVIL TOURS

THE DEVIL GAVE FRENCHY THE ABILITY TO SPEAK LATIN SOMETIMES.

Scolus omnia vincit!

A force pushed him down the church steps.

And the devil started leaving messages on him

HEY THERE!

BEST OF LUCK... THE DEVIL

Lorraine Warren, the demonologist, was frightened by the ultra dark aura that she saw surrounding Frenchy.

Frenchy turned in all his guns to the police, afraid of what his doppleganger might do to others.

WARREN POLICE

And as a result ~~the press heard about~~ all the strange goings-on.

NATIONAL ENQUIRER

FARMER POSSESSED IN SMALL NEW ENGLAND TOWN!!!!

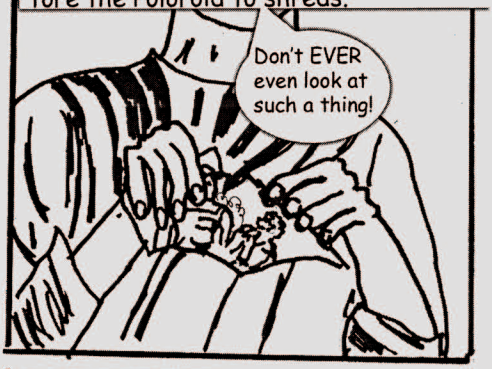
BOSTON HERALD

FARMER BATTLING DEVIL. TOWNSPEOPLE CLAIM: THERE'S NO DEVIL IN OUR TOWN! BUT HOW TO EXPLAIN THE ODD EVENTS?

THINKING FORGIVENESS MIGHT BE THE ANSWER, FRENCHY VISITED HIS FATHER'S GRAVE, ONLY TO BE FORCED BACK BY A MALEVOLENT POWER.

Strangers took a Poloroid of Frenchy and Nancy--he was surrounded by flames.

Two healers were dispensed to Frenchy from Bishop Harrington's office. They tore the Poloroid to shreds.



My mom flipped at the next news. Frenchy had been arrested for repeated rapings of his 13-year old stepdaughter.

He'd never touched me, and now it seemed that he'd improved my life.

In order to pay his bail and lawyer,Frenchy and Nancy sold out and moved nearby.

Halloween TRIVIA

Did you know ...

The biggest pumpkin to date
is recorded to weigh 1,092 lbs

The next full moon on Halloween
will be in the year 2020

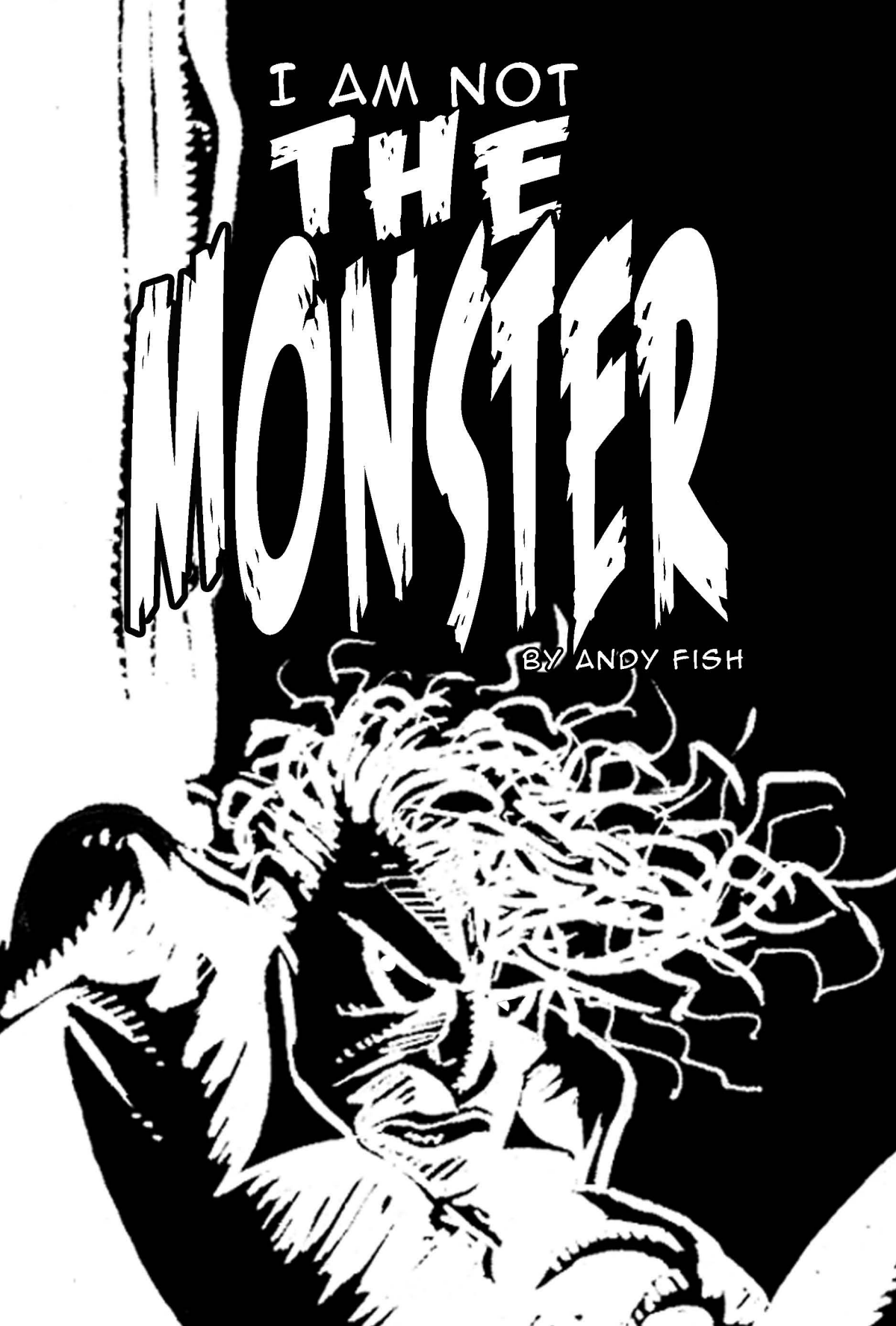
Nevada became a US state on
Halloween 1864

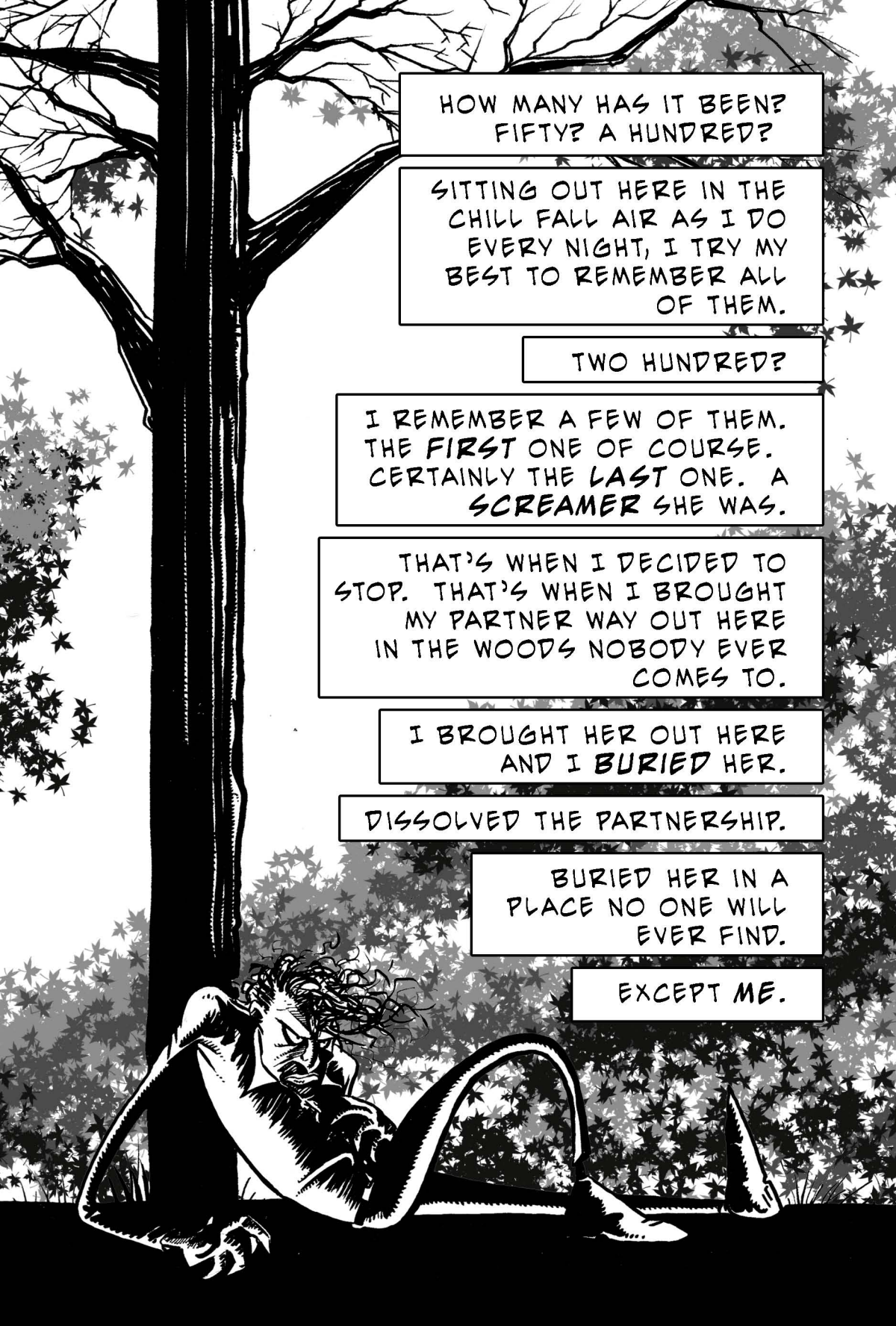
More Trivia on
page 107

ANDY
FISH

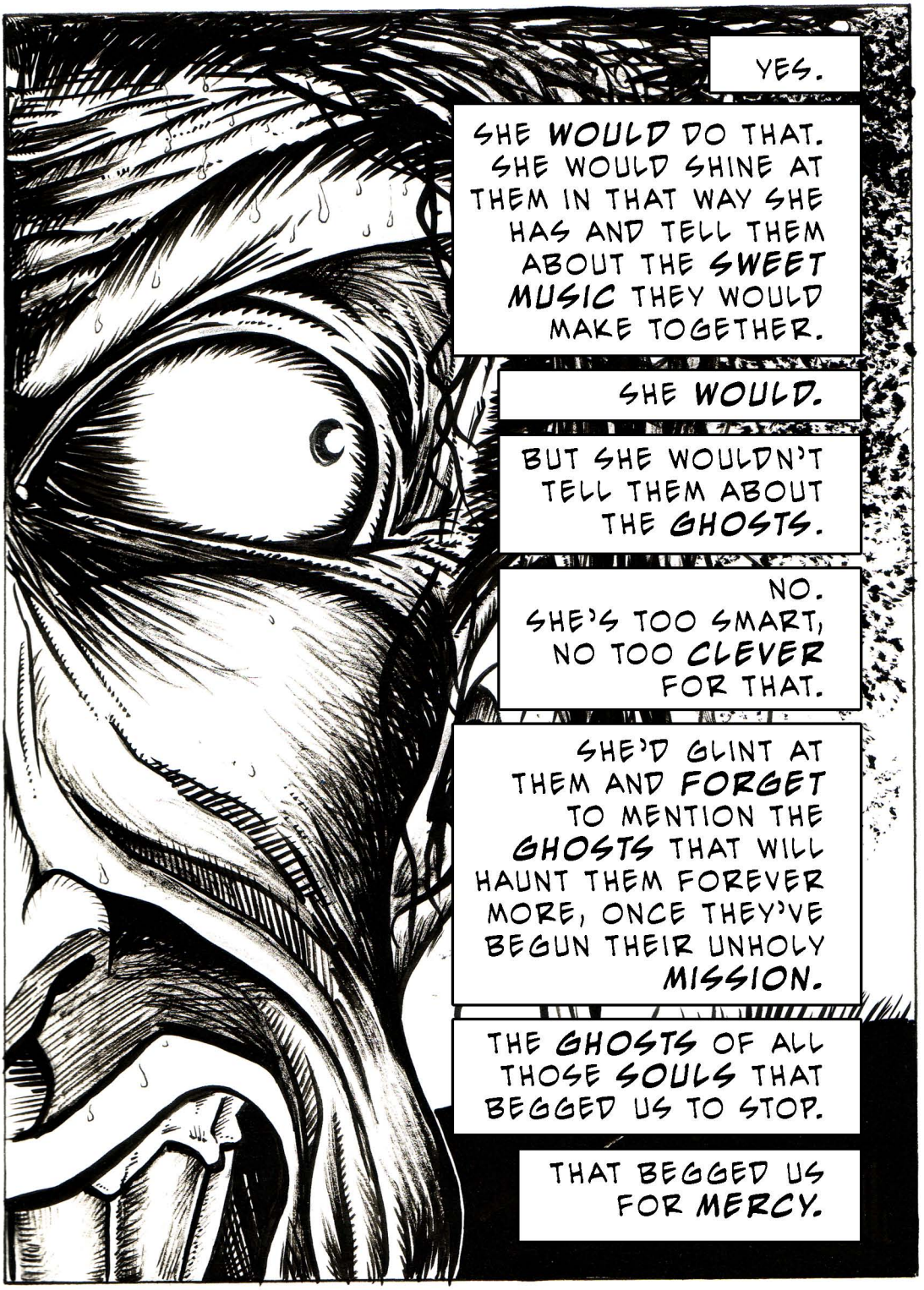
I AM NOT THE MONSTER

BY ANDY FISH



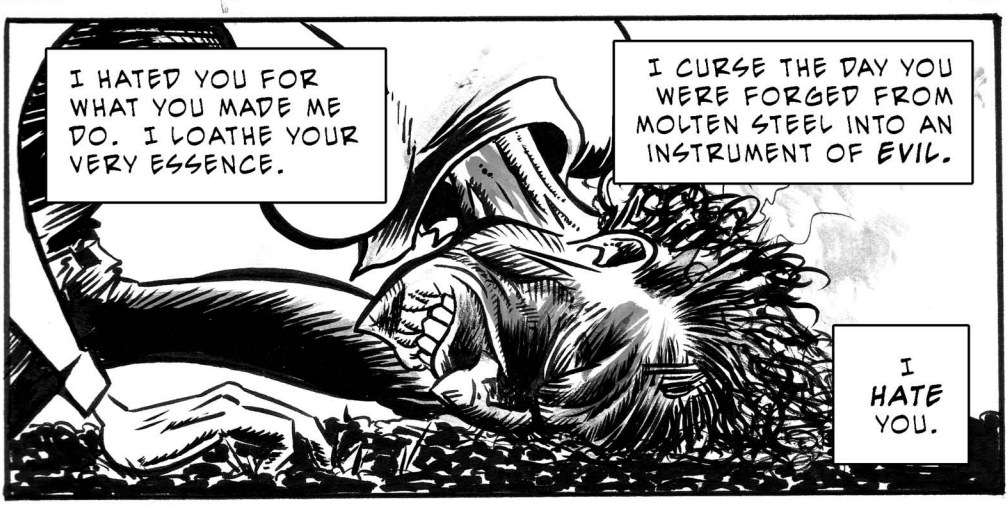

HOW MANY HAS IT BEEN? FIFTY? A HUNDRED?
SITTING OUT HERE IN THE CHILL FALL AIR AS I DO EVERY NIGHT, I TRY MY BEST TO REMEMBER ALL OF THEM.
TWO HUNDRED?
I REMEMBER A FEW OF THEM. THE FIRST ONE OF COURSE. CERTAINLY THE LAST ONE. A SCREAMER SHE WAS.
THAT'S WHEN I DECIDED TO STOP. THAT'S WHEN I BROUGHT MY PARTNER WAY OUT HERE IN THE WOODS NOBODY EVER COMES TO.
I BROUGHT HER OUT HERE AND I BURIED HER.
DISSOLVED THE PARTNERSHIP.
BURIED HER IN A PLACE NO ONE WILL EVER FIND.
EXCEPT ME.

WAIT.
WHAT IF SOMEONE WANDERED THROUGH HERE AND FOUND HER?
DUG HER UP.
SHE WOULD CONVINCE THEM. LIKE SHE DID ME.
SHE WOULD GLEAM AT THEM WITH HER BEAUTY AND CONVINCE THEM TO TAKE HER AND CARRY ON HER DARK WORK.
THEY WOULD DIG HER UP AND POLISH HER TO A SHINE AND TAKE HER OUT ON THE STREETS AND BEGIN ANEW.
WITHOUT ME.
SHE'D DO IT WITHOUT ME TO CONTROL HER.

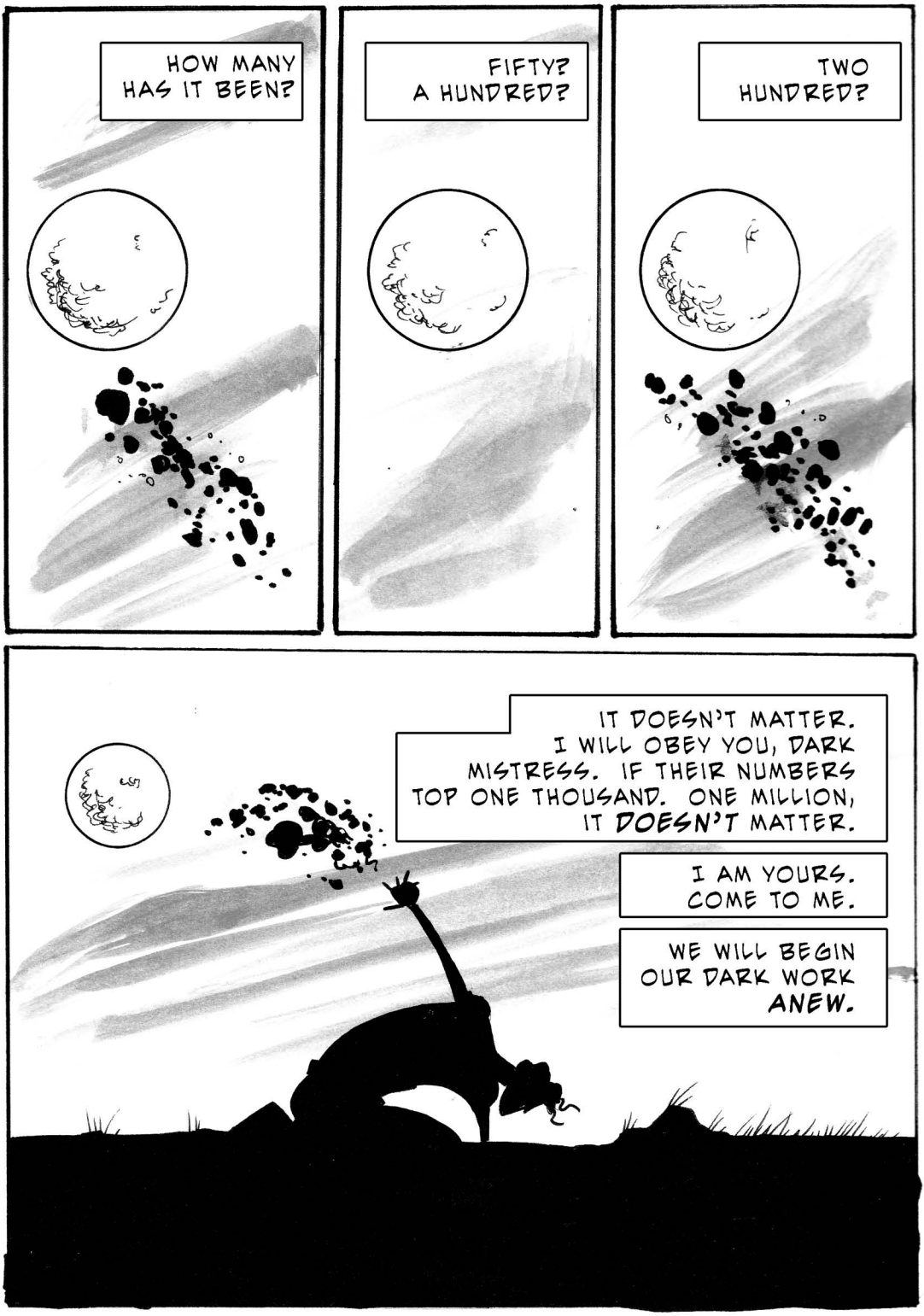

YES.
SHE WOULD DO THAT. SHE WOULD SHINE AT THEM IN THAT WAY SHE HAS AND TELL THEM ABOUT THE SWEET MUSIC THEY WOULD MAKE TOGETHER.
SHE WOULD.
BUT SHE WOULDN'T TELL THEM ABOUT THE GHOSTS.
NO. SHE'S TOO SMART, NO TOO CLEVER FOR THAT.
SHE'D GLINT AT THEM AND FORGET TO MENTION THE GHOSTS THAT WILL HAUNT THEM FOREVER MORE, ONCE THEY'VE BEGUN THEIR UNHOLY MISSION.
THE GHOSTS OF ALL THOSE SOULS THAT BEGGED US TO STOP.
THAT BEGGED US FOR MERCY.

MERCY!
WE NEVER SHOWED THEM ANY MERCY, DID WE?
AND THAT'S WHY THEY SHOW NONE TO ME NOW! THEY HAUNT ME, TORMENT ME.
THEY TELL ME IT WAS ALL MY DOING, BUT IT WAS YOU!

YOU WERE MY DARK MASTER.
I WAS MERELY YOUR SERVANT-- YOUR VALET. YOUR INSTRUMENT.
IT WAS MY BREATH THAT GAVE YOU LIFE.
BUT YOU INFLICTED THE PAIN ON OUR VICTIMS.
SOMETIMES THE TORTURE WAS TOO MUCH, AND THEIR PLEAS FOR MERCY WOULD TURN TO BEGGING FOR DEATH.


I HATED YOU FOR WHAT YOU MADE ME DO. I LOATHE YOUR VERY ESSENCE.
I CURSE THE DAY YOU WERE FORGED FROM MOLTEN STEEL INTO AN INSTRUMENT OF EVIL.
I HATE YOU.

NO! OH DARK MISTRESS I LOVE YOU! I LOVE YOU!
COME TO ME!
I CAN GO ON NO FURTHER! I NEED YOU AND CRAVE THE FEEL OF YOU IN MY HANDS.
OH DARK MISTRESS FORGIVE ME, PLEASE FORGIVE ME. I WAS WEAK.
SINCE I WAS A CHILD I'VE LONGED FOR YOU. I CAN'T FORGET YOU, NOT WITH YEARS OR AGE OR WEIGHT OF CONSCIOUS.
I NEED YOU.
I MUST HAVE YOU AGAIN.
YOU ARE MINE AND MINE ALONE.
NO ONE CAN HAVE YOU.
AND EVEN MORE.
I AM YOURS.


HOW MANY HAS IT BEEN?
FIFTY? A HUNDRED?
TWO HUNDRED?
IT DOESN'T MATTER. I WILL OBEY YOU, DARK MISTRESS. IF THEIR NUMBERS TOP ONE THOUSAND. ONE MILLION, IT DOESN'T MATTER.
I AM YOURS. COME TO ME.
WE WILL BEGIN OUR DARK WORK ANEW.

AND
THIS TIME.
NOTHING
WILL STOP
US.

VISIT US

WWW.UNDERCOVERFISH.COM

PAYOFF

Story and Artwork by Randy LeSage

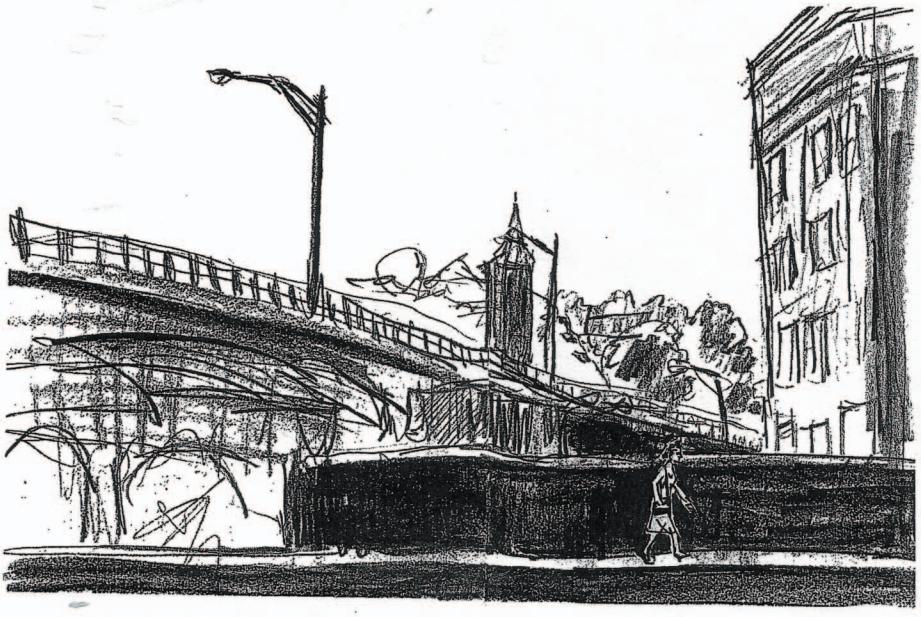
Hair in pink rollers, Aunt Ida marched straight ahead. No need to pay attention to the rusting steel bridges above, the old Kenmore Diner, or even Worcester's famous Coney Island Hot Dog sign atop a working-class bar-restaurant. But a taxi, with its letter 'I' broken off on its rooftop, cruised by, catching Ida's eye. The traffic honked as the cab's driver, swarthy faced and sweating, showed a pack of cigarettes through the passenger window toward Ida. Noticing it she pressed forward. She cranked her neck in the taxi's direction across the road lane, and nodded 'yes' fierce enough for him to see. Then she motioned with a thumb to a place around the corner.

Ida turned there and pressed her bony ass against the red brick façade.

Turns out the taxi driver was quite familiar with aunt Ida. He'd once had her as a fare. After parking around the corner illegal, he unloaded his hunched body from the cab. Holding out the cigarettes, one stretched from the pack, he offered it to Ida. She took it along with the cabbie's stare.

Now as the sun bore down, aunt Ida told the cabbie, "Right now I got business to take care of. Look me up on this street another time, man."

The taxi driver just turned from the sight of aunt Ida in her pink rollers under the scrutiny of the sun.



"I'll need a cab ride soon, man," Ida snorted a laugh. The cabbie grinned as he got back into his taxi and looked at his glib puss in the rear view mirror, recalling the lady's rattly bones and pointed nipples.

A small belch of smoke emitted from the cab's tailpipe as it sped away. Ida made smoke with her present, dragging hard on the long, thin stick. A moment later she felt at her black purse, keeping a safe hand on what was in there.

Ida was on her way to meet me – nephew Bill she calls me – to drop a couple ounces of weed. As she swung her skinny hips and black purse from the red corner, she spit out a grain of tobacco and tried to make like the reward I'd give her for the pot was somehow enough to ward off the pain of everyday life.

She stopped momentarily to let a baby stroller pass by. "How many masks does a fucking person screw on in a fucking lifetime," she questioned herself. The stroller gone, Ida marched on. She started talking to herself bigtime, "The rollers gotta go…," she reflected, thinking of her pink rollers on her head, "…before I meet nephew…"

Oh yes, hadn't he had her as a fare? She'd smoked like a fiend in the back seat this past winter. He'd picked her up outside the arena. A night two lightweights had slugged it out. Ida had been ringside and had told the cabbie a blow-by-blow description between drags on her smokes. Sitting in front of the wheel, the taxi driver had enjoyed her animated speech, didn't care much what she'd said.

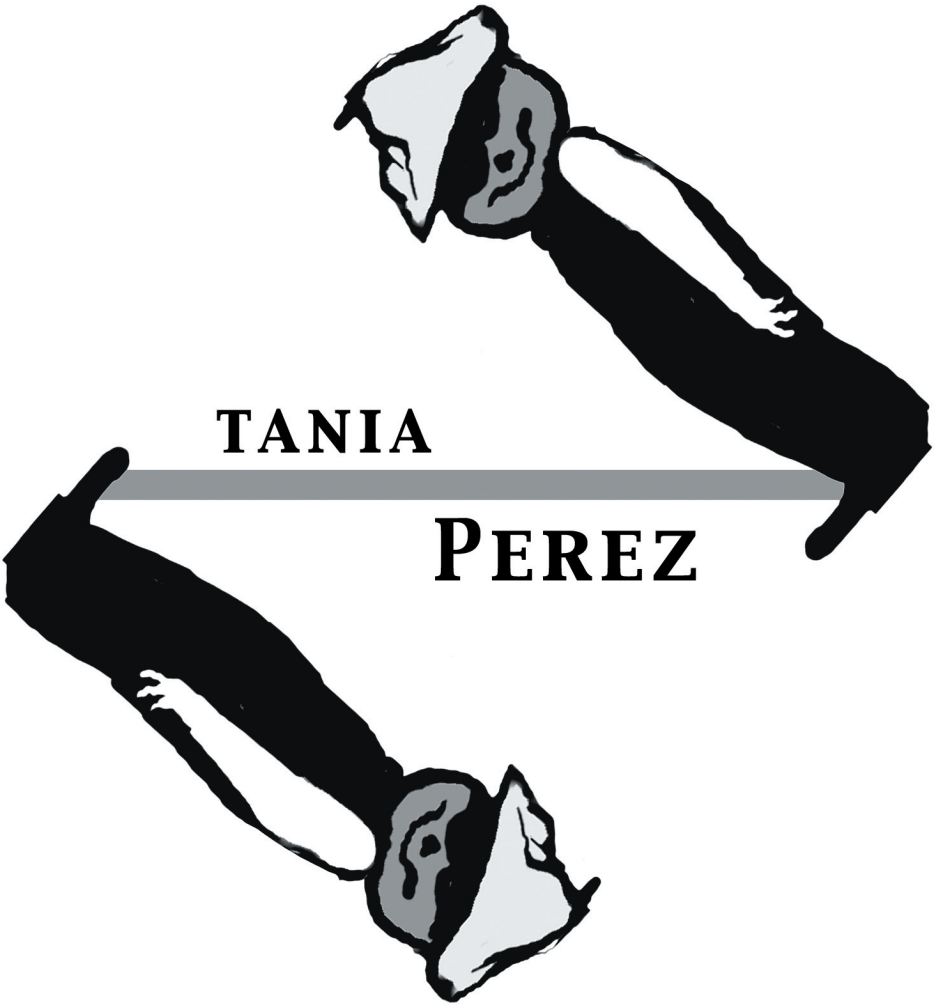
After, he'd taken her up on her offer to come upstairs to her place that night.

"It won't last long," she'd said, out of respect for keeping him away from earning more taxi fare. He appreciated that. To her, he was like a boxer she could finish off quick, sort of a post-match to the night's entertaining violence.

She slowed up at one of the houses, set alone and falling apart, wondering at the sure deviltry in its history. It appeared to be gutting itself inside out. Nearby, a black man in a mechanic's baseball cap leaned into an old boat of a car, listening to a riot of rap music on the radio. He was punching his fist into the driver door to the beat and scuffing the gravel with his sneakers. A black woman with kids stood in the tenement doorway. Ida suddenly passed at a clip. She could almost hear the black

woman's heart pounding. Ida muffled that fast with the voices that entered her own head and the bitter words she was compelled to spit back at them.

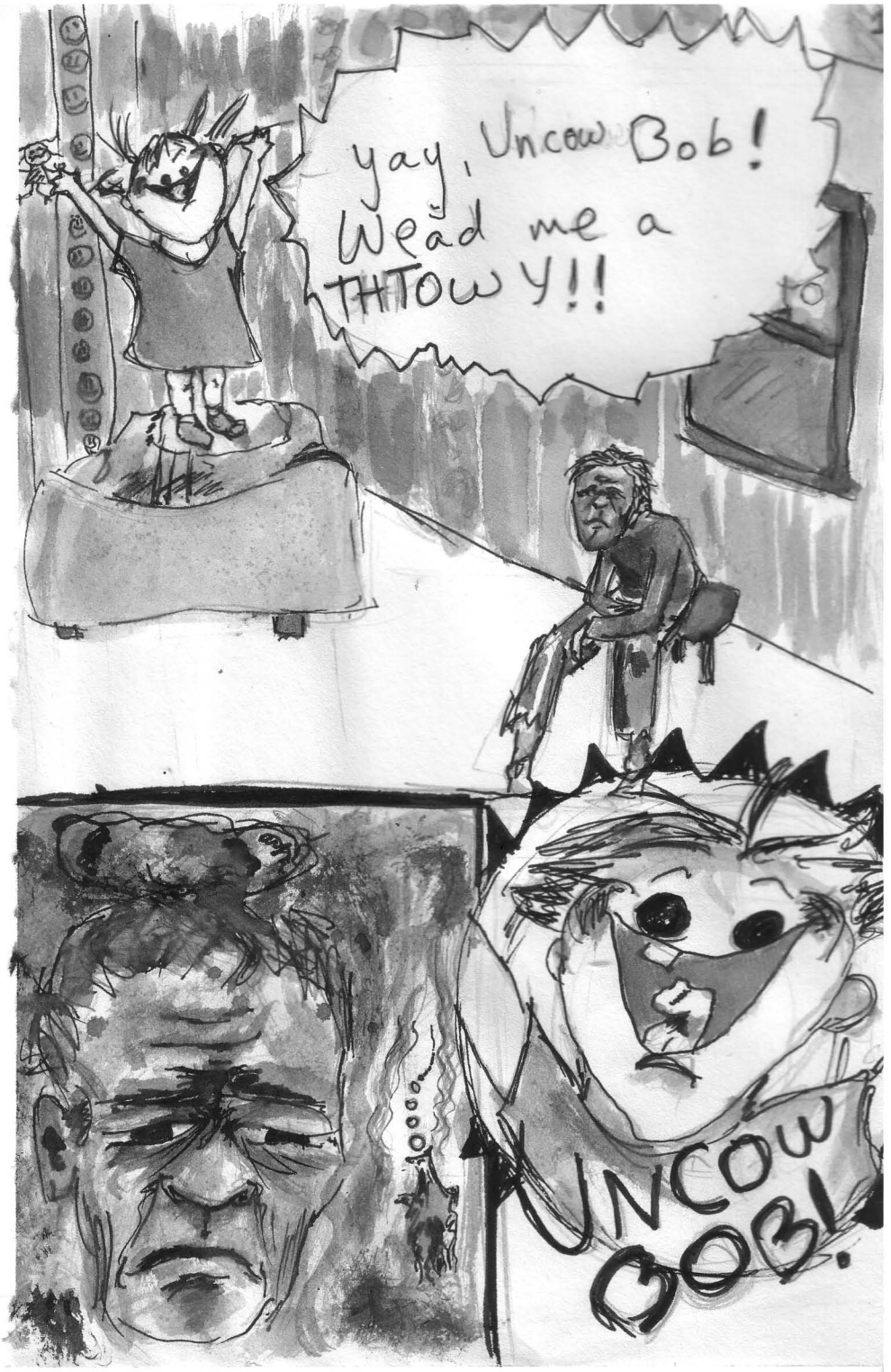
TREET VIDEO
WORCESTER - Main St South


TANIA
PEREZ

A Story that May Be Dis-couraging Rhather than Scary*

by Tania Periez

* if futility gives you dread,
it might actually be scary...anyway.
Halloween is mentioned at least...
so no complaints, ok?


yay, Uncow Bob!
Wead me a
THTOWY!!
UNCOW
BOB!

I know daddy thaid not to dith+uwb you when yourwe in youw
"Dawk Plathe;"
But I-m not dithtuwbing you, am I, Uncow Bob?

Huh?
¿Huh?
...?

did you want something.....?
will you tell me a thtowy? It'th Halloween.

Christmas, eh? I don't really have good stories, but at least I might teach you something valuable.
When I was your age 20 years ago, I had a friend named Jack.

Jack was a real nice kid. Bringing home the A+'s, karate medal's, and his sweet, humble attitude... Helping mom with dishes.
But he died, so that doesn't really matter...

Then I grew up some, and had a friend named Jenny. She had purple hair, charm and balls to spare, and old people hated her. We had the most legal fun... I never knew anyone so free.
But she died too, and the spell wore off.

Then there was Frank, who reached enlightenment and shunned all society. Only his biological functions mattered, and he lived the most simple life I'd seen. Hunt and forage, sleep, maybe mate with a chimp here and there...

Yeah, he died, too.
So you see, little girl, the lesson of the story is... blah, blah, you die.
Hey, Uncow Bob, Take it eathy, ok Fwiend? We should be glad liveth don't matthew. Without wethponthibility, we can do anything, fwee of guilt. Look at me, happy and cawefwee... I fwy not to wowwy.

Wow, kid. You're right.... I'm gonna stop moping and... get up and eat every once in a while. I might even shower. Thank you.
mmf!

You know, I was feeling some heaviness in my heart and on my shoulders,

Now it's in my arm and all over my chest....
-glug!-
-heave!-
-egh!-
-squeak!-
See? I told you....

-Ding-
Sweetie! Come see the trick-or-treaters!
...and then he died...
The End!